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The Promises of the Sacred Heart

1. I will give them the graces necessary for their state in life.
2. I will give peace in their families.
3. I will comfort them in all their trials and afflictions.
4. I will be their secure refuge in life and death.
5. I will bestow abundant blessings on all their undertakings.
6. Sinners shall find My Heart an ocean of mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall advance rapidly toward perfection.
9. I will bless every dwelling in which an image of My Heart shall be exposed and honored.
10. I will give priests a peculiar facility in converting the most hardened souls.
11. The persons who spread this devotion shall have their names written on My Heart, never to be effaced.
12. To those who will go to Communion on the First Friday of the month, during nine consecutive months, I promise the grace of final repentance: they shall not die in disgrace with Me, nor without receiving their sacraments, and My Heart shall be their secure asylum at the last hour.

An Act of Consecration

I, N.... N...give myself and consecrate to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, my person and my life, my actions, pains, and sufferings, so that I may be unwilling to make use of any part of my being save to honor, love, and glorify the Sacred Heart.

This is my unchanging purpose, namely, to be all His. at the same time renouncing with all my heart whatever is displeasing to Him.

I therefore take Thee, O Sacred Heart, to be the only object of my love, the guardian of my life, my assurance of salvation, the remedy of my weakness and inconstancy, the atonement for all the faults of my life, and my sure refuge at the hour of death.

Be then. O Heart of goodness, my justification before God Thy Father, and turn away from me the strokes of His righteous anger. O Heart of love. I put all my confidence in Thee, for I fear ever} tiring from my own wickedness and frailty, but I hope for all things from Thy goodness and bounty.

Do Thou consume in me all that can displease Thee or resist Thy holy will; let Thy pure love imprint Thee so deeply upon my heart, that I shall nevermore be able to forget Thee or to be separated from Thee, may I obtain from all Thy loving kindness the grace of having my name written in Thee, for in Thee I desire to place all my happiness and all my glory, living and dying in very bondage to Thee.

(St. Margaret Mary Alacoque)

An indulgence of 3 years.

A plenary indulgence once a month on the usual conditions for the daily devout recitation of this prayer (S.C.Ind., June 1, 1897, Jan. 13, 1898, and Apr. 21, 1908; S.P.Ap., Feb. 25, 1934).

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CHAPTER I

Our Best Friend

"Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend" (Ecclus. 6:15).

1. *A true and faithful friend is one of the most precious treasures of life.* In good as well as in evil days, every unspoiled human heart longs for a companion with whom it may share its joys, and to whom it may confide its sorrows. The unapproachable individual, isolated by selfishness, is not happy. He sees an antagonist in every fellow being, and since he cannot live without the ministrations of others, he tolerates the presence of those who are indispensable to him, but seeks by his manner to keep them, so far as possible, at a distance. He wishes to be sufficient unto himself, and finds pleasure in his aloofness. What a sad pleasure! The misanthrope is a burden to himself and an object of pity or of ridicule to others. Even the prizes of life — wealth and the power that comes of high station — are ice-cold if they be not warmed by sympathetic love. But in the days of misfortune and pain, the loneliness of such a selfish individual becomes even as the pains of hell, for his suffering is alleviated by no consoling glance, or cheerful word, no delicate sympathy. "Woe to him that is alone," says the Holy Spirit (Eccles. 4:10). Because man cannot be happy without the companionship of his fellow man, God has implanted in the hearts of all a social instinct. God made men social beings.

Even though there are many with whom we come into daily neighborly contact, nevertheless our intimate friend is one among thousands (cf. Ecclus. 6:6). Just as it is unnatural to shun the company of others through ill humor, so it would be thoughtless and frivolous to make any and every one the confidant of one's thoughts, intentions, plans, and sentiments. Such conduct would be the best way to reap disappointments, sorrow, and annoyances of all kinds. He who figuratively throws himself at the first comer need not expect to be valued highly and deemed worthy of intimate companionship. The high value which we put on ourselves must be shown in the choice of our friend.

Yet how often human shortsightedness is mistaken! The friend, on whom we thought we could build as on a rock, proves but loose talus and begins to be faithless. History is full of incidents of betrayed friendships, friendships rewarded with ingratitude. Of course, while there is hope of advantage to be reaped from a friend, most friendships endure. But when misfortune and want appear on the scene, it all too frequently becomes evident that the friendship was one of outward seeming only and was essentially selfish. Then the unfortunate victim of false friends may say with Job: "My brethren are put far from me. my kinsmen have forsaken me, and they that knew me act as though they knew me not" (cf. Job 19:13, 14).

An understanding heart is an essential prerequisite for friendship. No reasonable man chooses a fool for his friend. But the real essence of friendship consists in a faithful, loving heart which seeks not its own advantage but that of its friend. The love of friendship is an unselfish love of benevolence, and even the least self-seeking in dealing with one's friend is a stain on the friendship. Perfect friendship which fully measures up to the ideal of true friendship is a rare blessing here below, and he who possesses it cannot thank God sufficiently for this exceptional treasure (cf. Eccles. 6:14 ff).

But even the truest and noblest human friendship proves all too often but a fragile reed which breaks in the hands of him who would lean upon it. Even with the best of good will a friend may not be able to help, since nobility and the ability to help are not always found together. At times generous love would sacrifice its very lifeblood to help the friend in need, but is helpless. Who ever loved a friend more than David loved Jonathan, yet he was unable to prevent his violent death. He could only lament his loss, saying: "Jonathan is fallen. O my brother Jonathan, how I grieve for thee, exceeding beautiful and amiable! As a mother loveth her only son, so do I love thee" (cf. 2 Kings 1:25, 26). But neither the grief of his heart nor David's tears and complaints recalled his friend to life. Such is the impotence of human friendship.

Is there, then, no human friend who unites fidelity and nobility with the power to help his friends in all their cares and needs? There is one. He is our best Friend, Jesus Christ.

2. *Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ appeared visibly in our midst in order to be a true, noble, faithful, reliable friend to each one of us in all circumstances of life, at the hour of death, and beyond the grave for all eternity.* The Apostle writes that the goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared among us, saved us according to His mercy, justified us by His grace, and made us heirs of life everlasting (cf. Tit. 2:11-14). Our Savior Himself has told us that there is no better proof of friendship than that a man lay down his life for his friend (cf. Jn. 15:13). He gave us this proof of friendship when He died on the cross amid unspeakable tortures. The object of His coming was, in His own words, to give us this greatest proof of friendship. "The Son of Man is not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28). Each one of us may and must say with St. Paul: "The Son of God loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). If He is not truly our friend, who is?

That our Friend, Jesus Christ, possesses all the qualities which make a friend dear and amiable, that He possesses them as no man ever possessed them, is our firm conviction as Christians and Catholics. He is the wisest of the children of men; from His countenance the light of the Godhead shines upon us. He has all power in heaven and on earth; He is, therefore, an omnipotent Friend. But the quality which must attract us above all others and must fill us with enthusiastic devotion, is the fact that He possesses the heart of a friend, that His Heart beats with me, sympathetic, unselfish, and devoted friendship for us all.

O the friendship of this heart divine! Who can fathom its depth and breadth, its tenderness and constancy, its benevolence and fidelity? "Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. . . . Learn from Me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you will find rest for your souls" (Mt. 11:28, 29). Such is the loving invitation of the heart of our Savior. "Blessed and thrice blessed" our Lord terms those who seek their happiness with Him. A woman of the multitude once called the mother of Jesus blessed. What was the answer of Jesus? "Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it" (Lk. 11:28). (These are) "my brother and sister and mother" (Mt. 12:50). Is not the love of brothers and sisters or the love of a child for its mother the most tender love? Such is the love that our Savior promises us if we will be His friends. He left His relatives, yes, even His tenderly loved mother, to seek us, to save us from destruction by His precious blood, to make us happy and eternally blessed by His grace and His love.

After He had done everything for us that He could do, after He had done more than any man could ever have dared hope for, He comes to us and practically pleads for a return of love. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. If any man listens to My voice, and opens the door to Me, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Apoc. 3:20). in this manner He goes from heart to heart and begs for admission. He does not force us; He pleads for admission with the tender, loving accents of His divine Heart in order to give us Himself, the living Bread from heaven, as food for our souls, a divine Food which contains all manner of sweetness. He who has once tasted the full sweetness of this spiritual repast needs no earthly pleasure to make him happy. At the same time he is superior to all the misery with which the world and the insufficiencies of this life can trouble him. We know that this is true from the lives of God's saints, those heroes of love for Jesus.

St. John the Evangelist, resting on the bosom of the Savior, had drunk deeply from the stream of the love of this divine Heart, and even to an advanced old age knew of no other topic for his sermons than the virtue of charity — always charity. Twelve centuries after his death, he appeared on the day of his feast to the renowned mystic, the great St. Gertrude, and said to her: "Come with me to rest a while on the bosom of our Savior where are hid all the treasures of beatitude." There the Saint became conscious of the pulsations of the divine Heart, from which she drew unspeakable consolation. She then asked St. John: "Did you not experience the bliss of these divine pulsations when you rested on our Savior's breast at the last supper?" "I did perceive them," he answered, "and was deeply moved by them." Then St. Gertrude replied: "Why, then, did you keep this a secret, and not record it for our progress?" John answered: "It was my duty to write for the nascent Church facts of the uncreated Word of the Father which no man could discover even to the end of time. But this language of the pulsations of the divine Heart was reserved for later times in order that the aging world, growing cold in love, might again become enkindled at the recitation of such mysteries." [footnote: St. Gertrude. *Gesandter der göttlichen Liebe*, Freiburg, 1915. bk. 4, chap. 4, pp. 312-314.]

We also live at a time in which the words of Christ are verified: "And because iniquity will abound, the charity of the many will grow cold" (Mt. 24:12). In this loveless, selfish, cold world, our divine Savior allows the warmth of the love of His divine Heart to shine forth in order to thaw the ice that incrusts the hearts of men, and thus to produce a new spiritual spring of vigorous love of God and neighbor. What St. John the Evangelist told St. Gertrude at the end of the thirteenth century, our Savior Himself repeats in other words to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque at the end of the seventeenth. He tells her that the revelation of the devotion to His Sacred Heart is one of the final effects and efforts of His love; that He intends, by means of this devotion, to give the Christians living at the end of the last epoch of time a special dower by giving them an object and a means to animate once more their love for Him. [footnote: For a good account of the Revelations see *These Three Hearts*, by Margaret Yeo (Bruce, 1952). The quotations of our Lord to St. Margaret Mary used in this book are from *Vie et Œuvres de Sainte Marguerite-Marie Alacoque, II*, nouvelle édition authentique. Paris, 1920.]

Despite the cooling of love among Christians, our Savior has, then, not ceased to be our Friend. On the contrary, He wishes to give a new proof of His love, especially in these our times, by the revelation of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. "Behold I stand at the gate and knock." Shall we turn our Savior away, our best Friend, our noblest Friend, our omnipotent Friend, who is ever ready to help us? He desires our love, our poor, weak, small heart in order to give us in exchange His own so rich with all the treasures of the divinity. Is this not an advantageous exchange? In other matters we are quick to seize on anything which makes for our advantage. Why not in this?

3. *What is it that prevents us from complying with the wish of our best Friend, and cultivating the devotion to His Sacred Heart?* If our Lord were to appear to us visibly, and captivate us with the charm of His personality, we would be impressed and drawn to Him as were the thousands who followed Him into the desert, and, despite hardships and hunger, remained with Him for days. But we do not see our Savior, we do not hear His voice; for us He is only a rather vague picture reflected from the distant past. Ah, if we could but once see Him with all the fascinating attractiveness which He displayed when He walked among men!

Our Savior, however, thinks otherwise. He terms especially blessed those who do not see and yet believe (cf. Jn. 20:29). He tells His apostles that it is expedient for them that He go, and that they see Him no more (cf. Jn. 16:7). The reason was that they were too much preoccupied with His external charm; while it was His intention that they should penetrate to the sentiments of His heart, and that they should make these sentiments their own. St. Paul, the apostle, designates the fact that he has ceased to know Christ according to the flesh as a great advance (cf. 2 Cor. 5:16). The thing that matters, then, is to understand and make one's own the sentiments of Christ. We must cultivate the mind of Christ Jesus (cf. Phil. 2:5). Similarity of sentiments is of the essence of friendship.

Or is it true that friendship is based on attractive features and a beautiful figure? No! Friendship is an affair of the heart. Duplicity may lurk beneath a captivating exterior, and an elegant body does not always house a noble soul. That which makes a friend a friend is faithful, generous love. Such love is by its very nature invisible. We can come to a knowledge of its existence only from outward signs; frequently we merely surmise or conjecture its presence. But these conclusions, conjectures, and surmises are at times deceitful, and later cause bitter sorrow to one who has relied on them. Such a contingency is excluded in friendship with our Savior. We do not see Him with the eyes of our body, but we know Him with the eyes of faith. Stronger than the universe is His love. His infallible revelation manifests this love to us, His immutability vouches for its unshaken firmness, His omnipotence guarantees its unfailing efficacy. The love of Jesus has never yet permitted one who remained faithful to be put to shame. Hence, St. Peter says so joyously: "This is your joy, your unutterable and glorified happiness, that you love Jesus Christ, whom you have never seen; that you believe in Him, whom you have never beheld. Your reward will be the salvation of your souls, the eternal inheritance of heaven" (cf. Pet. 1:8). We do not see our Savior; yet the certainty we have of His love is greater than any certainty based on the testimony of our senses.

Let us honor His heart, and give Him our hearts. Then between our heart and His a communion of life will result that will effect inner experiences, which are indeed invisible, but which will, if we prove faithful and the love of God continually grows within us, nevertheless disclose a higher, more glorious world than the world of sense round about us; a spiritual world, which, however, is no less real than the invisible air we breathe. A new, vital atmosphere will envelop us, and impart new energies to our souls and to our minds a freshness as of youth, which age cannot dim, so that they will spread their wings as the eagle and soar to the heights where is God. "For what have I in heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? . . . Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever" (Ps. 72:25, 26).

Let us renew our heart at the heart of our Savior. Let us be devoted to Him as to our best Friend. Let us become one heart with Him. No one can be near a fire and not be warmed. The heart of Jesus is a furnace of the purest, holiest love. The more intimately we unite ourselves to Him, the more intensely this love will burn in our hearts and consume all impurities. The purer our hearts become, the more the friendship of Jesus will make us happy as only the love of God can make one happy. Heart of Jesus, burning with love for me, enkindle my heart with love for Thee.

CHAPTER II

Our Noblest Friend

*"But to me Thyfriends, O God, are
made exceedingly honorable" (Ps. 138:17).*

1. *We speak at times of a noble heart, a true heart, a generous heart.* What meaning do we attach to the word "heart"? Obviously, we do not mean the physical heart, for nobility, fidelity, generosity are properties of the soul. They are manifested in the soul's higher spiritual life. The heart, therefore, of which we predicate spiritual properties, is the life of the soul. But in modern phraseology the word "heart" signifies the interior life insofar as it consists not merely of cold processes of reasoning, but also insofar as it includes desires, wishes, love; that is, those acts influenced by the will. We often say: "This person is an intellectualist without a heart," for we predicate a heart only of one who has warmth, and the warmth of the soul is love. It is love, then, both the love of desire and the love of benevolence, with all its various activities and tendencies, which constitutes that heart to which we assign good or bad, laudable or blamable properties.

This figurative language is in entire conformity with Holy Writ. There we read of a hardened heart that has become as hard as stone (cf. Job 41:15), of a bad and deceitful heart (cf. Eccles. 3:29; 36:22), of a blinded heart (cf. Mk. 6:52); also of a wise heart (cf. Prov. 18:15), of a good and perfect heart (cf. Lk. 8:15), of a pure heart (cf. Ps. 50:12), of a happy heart (cf. Eccles. 51:20). Of the first Christians we read: "They were of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). Even God, who is a pure spirit, speaks of His heart (cf. 3 Kings 9:3).

Man, of course, is not a pure spirit. His body participates in all his vital activities. It is a fact of experience that there is an intimate relation between the physical heart of man and strong spiritual emotions. Great joy, deep grief, love, hate, and anger affect his heart so that its pulsations are strengthened and accelerated or weakened and retarded. A strong, healthy heart makes for determination, character, cheerfulness; while an ailing heart may be the cause of discouragement and excessive sensitiveness. This intimate interaction between the physical heart and the spiritual life of man is the reason why we apply the word "heart" to the spiritual realm and represent love, of its nature invisible, by a physical heart. This is also true of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, in which we venerate the love of our Lord under the symbol of His human heart; in a word, it is friendship with our Lord. When God says to us: My son, give Me thy heart" (Prov. 23:26), He is demanding our love. When Jesus points to His heart and says: "Behold this heart, which has loved man so much," and demands our hearts in return, the meaning is simply this: "I wish that you would love Me, as I love you; I beg you, let us be true, faithful friends." Devotion to the Sacred Heart, therefore, is essentially a very perfect friendship between the soul and its Savior.

How many friendships there are in the world which are of little or no profit and whose one purpose seems to be to implant and foster the low ideals, the evil passions of one in the other. Evil company corrupts good morals. If evil is the bond of union that joins two human hearts, it may be called friendship by the same token that theft may be called work. The outer shell is there, but in place of a sound kernel we find mold. Friendship, therefore, stands for something noble and ennobling. Consequently, we must proceed with great caution in choosing our friend, for if the proverb: "Tell me with whom you associate, and I will tell you who you are," is true of ordinary association, how much truer it must be when applied to one's friends. For through friendship two hearts become to a certain extent but one heart in their views and aims. We have here not only a certain conformity, the product of all human relationship, but a real unification of thoughts and desires. The prophet's condemnation of the Israelites when they began to love false gods is applicable to a man who takes an evil person for his confidant and gives him his friendship: "They became abominable, as those things were, which they loved" (Osee 9:10). Those, however, who love God, the Apostle says, are one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17).

This explains at once the great significance of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. The heart of Jesus symbolizes the innermost life of the soul of Jesus: hence, to practice devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is to participate in the sentiments of Jesus; is to become identified with the heart, the wishes, the intentions of Jesus; is to cultivate a tender friendship for Jesus. Ah, if we could only grasp what it means to rest on the heart of Jesus, to enter the sanctuary of this Sacred Heart, to drink of the fountains of grace ever streaming from it, to become intoxicated with this holy love, to be able to say with the Apostle: "It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

2. *All creatures, be they men or angels, are good only insofar as they participate in the goodness of God.* "No one is good but God only" (Lk. 18:19), are the words of Christ Himself. God only is good in Himself; He only is essentially good just as He alone has being in Himself. Everything that exists besides God is of itself nothing. Nothing, however, cannot be good. God, indeed, calls all creation good, but only insofar as He has made it so. "And God saw all tilings that He had made, and they were very good" (Gen. 1:31). Compared with God, heaven and earth and all they contain are as nothing. "And they are counted to Him as nothing and vanity" (Isa. 40:17).

But if we consider moral excellence or holiness, then God is the thrice holy, while man is deceitful (cf. Ps. 115:11), untrustworthy, inconstant. Of course, we admire many men for their exceptional moral qualities, but none of them have these of themselves, they have all received them from their Creator, "all wisdom is from the Lord God" (Ecclus. 1:1); "He is the guide of wisdom and the director of the wise" (Wisd. 7:15) who gives power and strength (cf. Ps. 67:36); those that presume of themselves He humbles (cf. Jth. 6:15).

All our moral strength and goodness come to us from God through our Lord Jesus Christ, "Who has become for us God-given wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). This is why our Savior tells us: "He who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit" (Jn. 15:5), fruit of holiness and of eternal life. The purpose and aim of the devotion to the Sacred Heart is to unite us ever more intimately with Jesus so that we may draw from Him in ever-increasing measure the strength to bring forth good fruit. One who cultivates this devotion according to the intention of our Lord does not rest with a consideration of the external words and deeds of Jesus, but penetrates to the root of them all, namely, the sentiments and intentions of His Sacred Heart. He strives to become an intimate friend of Jesus, a friend from whom no mysteries of love are hidden, a friend with whom Jesus speaks heart to heart.

To rest at the heart of Jesus means to rest at the fountain of all holiness, and to drink from it at pleasure deep draughts. Then if the old proverb is verified in us: "Tell me with whom you associate, and I will tell you who you are. how happy we shall be! Since all created holiness comes from God, what shall we think and say of the holiness of this Sacred Heart? Because of the hypostatic union, the relation of this Sacred Heart to the Divinity unspeakably surpasses the union with God of even the greatest saints, of the Blessed Virgin herself. In the whole realm of creation there is not another heart so truly the noble heart of a friend as the heart of Jesus; indeed, there is not one that even remotely approximates His. This is the reason why the friendship of Jesus exerts an ennobling influence such as no other friendship can.

In order that we may call a heart truly noble, it is necessary above all else that it be not an abomination in the sight of God because of serious moral deficiencies. What is hateful to God cannot be truly noble, no matter how attractive external appearances may be. God's judgments are true; appearances, deceptive. The greater the purity of heart, singleness of will, intentions, desires, the nobler such a heart appears in the eyes of God, who sees in it a masterpiece of His grace, a work that immeasurably surpasses all the grandeur and beauty of the sensible creation.

How pure is the heart of Jesus? So pure that a more exalted purity is inconceivable in a created being. The humanity of Jesus is united in one person to the Divinity. There are not two persons, God and a man, but only one divine Person, who has both the divine and human nature, who operates divine works through His divine nature and human works through His human nature. Because of His divine nature Jesus does all that His heavenly Father does (cf. Jn. 5:17) because of His human nature He performs external and internal acts like other men. He became like unto us in thought, desire, and act, sin alone excepted (cf. Heb. 4:15). The Divinity excludes sin as something absolutely contradictory. Sin is rebellion against God, enmity with God, separation from God. But God cannot rebel against Himself, be at enmity with Himself, separate Himself from Himself. Hence, there can be no sin in a divine Person. Yet if the humanity of Christ were capable of sin, there would be sin in a divine Person. This is impossible. Therefore the hypostatic union brings about such an opposition to sin that sin itself becomes an impossibility. This is why the Apostle says of Jesus: "(He is) holy, innocent, undefiled, set apart from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). Jesus Himself demanded of His enemies: "Which of you can convict Me of sin?" (Jn. 8:46.)

We must not imagine, however, that the holiness of Jesus is a static condition like the holiness of a baptized child. Between the heart of Jesus and the Person of the Divine Word, there is uninterrupted communication. The divine and the human perceptions of Jesus are in perfect harmony; the human and divine wills will one and the same thing. A tide of love continually pours forth from the Divinity into the human heart of Jesus and from there surges back again with all its force to the Divinity. Between the heart of Jesus and the divine personality there is never for a moment the slightest discontinuity or interruption in the continual thought about, the eternal love of, and the constant living for one another. True, the same may be affirmed of the blessed in heaven but in a far lower degree. No saint becomes one person with God. Christ alone is both truly man and the Second Person of the Trinity. Each of the blessed receives a definite measure of beatific knowledge and love according to his works. Only the heart of Jesus receives the gifts of God without measure; God gives Him all that a mere creature as creature is capable of receiving (cf. Jn. 3:34, 35), the purest holiness, the most profound comprehension of God, the most ardent love of God.

Does the Sacred Heart possess these treasures of grace for itself alone? No, for of His fullness we have all received grace for grace (cf. Jn. 1:16). Jesus invites us, saying: "If any man thirst for holiness, let him come to Me and drink. . . . Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (Jn. 7:37, 38), "water that springeth forth unto everlasting life" (cf. Jn. 4:14). No human friendship on earth has such power to

ennoble as the friendship of Jesus. In the heart of Jesus we find the personal love of God which communicates its holiness and graces to our hearts; it lifts our hearts above all unworthy ambitions and draws our desires to eternal, infinite treasures; it makes saints of us if we submit to its guidance. St. Margaret Mary Alacoque says: "My loving Master has informed me that He greatly desires to be loved by men. Moved by this desire, He has determined to manifest His Sacred Heart and to open unto men this treasurehouse of love and mercy, this treasurehouse of all the graces which lead to salvation and perfection. He has determined to enrich beyond calculation all those who love and honor Him with all their strength and strive that He be loved and honored by others." Are we perhaps so abundantly blessed with spiritual treasures that we do not need the treasures of this divine heart? Remember, the self-sufficient rich will go empty away; but those that hunger, who are sensible of their misery, and who seek relief for their spiritual wants in the heart of Jesus, will have their fill.

Let us seek the friendship which Jesus offers us. Without love no human heart can be happy. We certainly can find no more worthy or more salutary object of love than Jesus Christ. Let us enter this heart open for all those who truly wish to love. Let us love Jesus with the love which we draw from His divine heart, and we shall be re-created into a living image of His divine beauty.

3. *Full of love and confidence, let us go to the heart of Jesus.* When the queen of Saba came to Solomon, heard his wisdom, and saw his treasures, she exclaimed: "Blessed are thy men, and blessed are thy servants, who stand before thee always" (3 Kings 10:8). How much happier we are, for a greater than Solomon is here, as Christ Himself has told us (cf. Mt. 12:42). Here no mortal man speaks sounding words to the ears of our body, but the eternal Son of God speaks words of heavenly wisdom to our souls; here we are not merely shown earthly treasures, but the incorruptible treasures of eternal life are bestowed upon us. Hence, we must say in the words of the Breviary: "Since we have now come to the heart of Jesus, we will not permit anything to separate us from it." [footnote: *Breviary*, lesson of the third nocturn for the feast of the Sacred Heart. The treatise, composed by an unknown author, is there attributed to St. Bonaventure.] O Lord, we wish to be mindful of Thy heart, to rejoice and be glad. O Most beautiful Jesus, wash me from my wickedness and cleanse me from my sins, so that purified by Thee I may approach Thee, the all pure, and live in Thy heart all the days of my life. Many saints have found in the Sacred Heart of Jesus a sweet and beatific resting place. Why do we not care to enter and to enjoy the same experiences that they enjoyed?

Perhaps you will say: "If I were a saint. I, too, would find all my happiness in the Sacred Heart; but there are my sins, my many and great sins — how dare I approach a sanctuary' that is so resplendent with purity?"

We must put aside such fears, for they are without foundation. Did not our Lord say explicitly that He came for the sake of sinners? (Cf. Mt. 9:13.) Is Jesus one of those who say: "Touch Me not, for I am holy"? Think of the woman who was known as a public sinner and who, full of the deepest contrition, cast herself at our Savior's feet as He sat at dinner in the Pharisee's house. The Pharisee, indeed, thought: If Jesus only knew what manner of woman that is, He would not permit her to touch Him. But the judgment of Jesus was very different: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much" (cf. Lk. 7:36 ff.).

There are two classes of sinners, the hardened and the contrite. Hardened sinners may not approach the heart of Jesus; they do not wish to be friends of Jesus. Repentant sinners, however, who have sought absolution from their sins in the sacrament of penance, will find the heart of Jesus open to receive them. If the thought of our sins tends to keep us away from the heart of Jesus, let us take courage and not only cast ourselves at the feet of Jesus like Mary Magdalen, but with a holy recklessness let us enter the very sanctuary of His heart and with fervent petitions implore there, at the source of all moral excellence,

ever-increasing freedom from sin, ever nobler sentiments, and more energetic striving after heavenly things. At the heart of Jesus we will recover from weaknesses and grow strong in energetic love; our heart will daily become nobler because of its friendship with the noblest of all human hearts. Thus we will reflect the glory of the Lord and become daily more perfectly transformed into His image from gloiy to glory before the face of the Lord (cf. 2 Cor. 3: 18). Then we will experience in our own person how highly the friends of God are honored.

CHAPTER III

A Sympathetic Friend

*"He is not ashamed to call
them brethren" (Heb. 2:11).*

1. *Why did God become man?* The humanity of Christ is not our final aim and end. That is God alone. Hence St. Paul, speaking of the consummation of the world, says that all things are subjected to the Son of God. The Son of God, however, according to His humanity, shall Himself be subjected unto Him that put all tilings under Him that God may be all in all (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-28). As mediator, the Son of God leads the whole human race back to God, and, as supreme head of the Church, offers Himself and His kingdom, an eternal praise offering, to His heavenly Father.

The humanity of Christ is the way that leads to this end. "I," says Jesus, "am the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6). Who walks on this way walks not in darkness, "but will have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12); for whoever walks in tmth, comes into possession of the fullness of truth, even into the possession of God. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness" (1 Jn. 1:5). If God, then, is the light of the spiritual world, is He not able to illumine our souls with light and to warm our hearts? He is not only able to do so, but He actually does this. Every best gift comes from the Father of lights (cf. Jas. 1:17). He is with us, about us, within us with His wisdom, His power, His being; "for in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28), and this applies above all to the life of our soul. And yet it was expedient and, to a certain extent, even necessary that the eternal Light of God come into the world and assume human form. For the divinity is too intense a light for our weak human vision, and becomes darkness because of its infinite intensity. "No man has at any time seen God" (Jn. 1:18), for He is invisible (cf. Col. 1:15) "and dwells in light inaccessible" (1 Tim. 6:16).

It is true that the invisible God can, to a certain extent, be known from a contemplation of creation, in which His eternal power and divinity shine forth (cf. Rom. 1:20). By process of reasoning we can rise from the creature to the existence of the Creator and to a knowledge of some of His attributes. This process, however, is at best impersonal. Material objects present themselves for our contemplation and, because they are effects produced by God, lead us back to their first cause. The learned of the world have elaborated

this reasoning process often very profoundly and ingeniously. But in all truth we must say that this chain of argumentation leaves us cold and unmoved. At most our intellect is satisfied, but our heart remains empty. Our heart desires personal communion with God — if possible, confidential, friendly communion with Him.

O God, although Thou art so near to us, Thou art still infinitely exalted above us; although our Creator, Thou art a Majesty before whom the angels tremble and hide their countenance. How dare we think of friendship with Thee? For friendship presupposes a certain equality, and between Thee and us there is nothing but inequality; an unbridgeable abyss separates Thee, the Most High, from us, poor worms of earth. Can a worm enter into friendship with man? And yet the worm is not so far below us as we are below God. Must, then, the yearning of our hearts for rest in God remain unsatisfied here below? Listen to the invitation of our Savior: “Come to Me all ye who are heavily laden, come to Me with the hunger and thirst of your souls, come to Me all ye who seek God. No man has seen the Father, but I, and I will show Him to you, and lead you to Him. He that seeth Me, seeth the Father also” (cf. Jn. 14:8 ff). After the first Pentecost the Apostles understood all this perfectly, and St. John exclaimed with joy: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory — glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father” (Jn. 1:14). Yes, we have seen with our eyes and touched with our hands the Word of Life (cf. 1 Jn. 1:1), the personal, eternal, consubstantial Word of the Father.

In the person of Jesus, God comes among us personally in a manner which no created reason could have imagined. As true man He came to us men without in any way compromising His divinity. When Jesus speaks to us, God speaks to us; when Jesus loves us, God loves us; when we rest on the heart of Jesus, we are resting on the heart of God. Between God and ourselves, impersonal creatures need no longer mediate as the objects of our thought. The true mediator now is the “one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). The heart of Jesus is a real human heart and, at the same time, the heart of the Second Person of the blessed Trinity; in it dwells the fullness of the Godhead corporeally (cf. Col. 2:9). Therefore the heart of Jesus is as worthy of adoration as God Himself; we can safely give it all our love without derogating from the love we owe God. Nevertheless, it remains a truly human heart with all the sentiments, emotions, tendencies, of which a spotless and noble heart is capable. In it the infinite majesty of God need not frighten us, for this majesty dwells there in goodness and kindness (cf. Tit. 3:4). The attractiveness and loving kindness of our Savior manifest themselves precisely in this that He not only performed human acts, but always manifested such a truly human heart; in Him we do not find the terrifying God of infinite majesty, but the God-man, whose delight it is to be with the children of men and to bestow benefits upon them.

2. *Jesus possesses a sympathetic, human heart*, it was not really necessary that God should become man to redeem the human race by means of perfect satisfaction for sin. By assuming the angelic nature the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity could, by one act of obedience, have rendered complete satisfaction to His heavenly Father for the disobedience of man. But the Son of God preferred to become man, because that was the easiest and most natural way to win the love of men.

He did not assume an angelic nature, says St. Paul, but a human nature, in order that He might be like unto us in all things, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest. The Apostle depicts our Lord as jubilant because of the numerous members of the family of men which the Father has given Him. “I will declare Thy name to My brethren; in the midst of the church will I praise Thee. . . . Behold I and My children, whom God hath given Me” (Heb. 2:12, 13). We are all the children of our Savior, because the supernatural life is communicated to us through His sacred humanity; we are His brothers, because He has

assumed flesh and blood from our race and has implanted in us once again the grace through which we become adopted children of God just as He is the natural Son of God. Love for us as His blood relatives, love for us as His spiritual children flames in the heart of Jesus.

He might miraculously have appeared in our midst as a grown man, the founder of the new race of God, like Adam, the parent of our race. But He preferred to be born of a human mother, "made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4). God became a babe in the crib for love of us. Prompted by His great love, He at once sent His angels to summon men that they might see under what a loving guise their Savior had come into their midst. "You shall find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger." Little wonder that their hearts were filled with joy. "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen" (Lk. 2:12, 20).

The Infant in the manger was not bereft of the use of reason and incapable of love as other children are. The eternal wisdom of God that dwelt within Him illumined His intellect with the rays of its brightness and enkindled His heart with love. The Infant in the manger saw all men and loved all men not only collectively but individually. What was His first prayer at the inception of His life? An offering of Himself to His heavenly Father for the salvation of men. ". . . in coming into the world, He says: Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not: but a body Thou hast fitted to Me" which I shall offer to Thee in satisfaction for the sins of My brethren. "Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of Me to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:5, 7). Then began that hard, rough, sacrificial way that stretched from the crib to the cross, an uninterrupted series of acts of self-sacrificing love for the salvation of His brethren.

For more than ten years the Savior labored in obscurity as an ordinary carpenter in the carpenter shop at Nazareth, and thus sanctified the burden of labor that rests upon mankind. He thus encouraged His hard-working brethren of all times not to consider unbearable a burden that He bore for love of them, nor as derogatory, what the King of Glory did not consider beneath His dignity. This monotonous succession of years, until Jesus reached the age of thirty, was not time lost to the actual work of saving souls; for while Jesus worked with His hands and earned His bread in the sweat of His brow. His heart, ever busied with our needs, was offering His labors to His heavenly Father that, in view of them, God might graciously accept the heavy yoke of labor which rests upon so many millions of men, and reward a thousandfold each effort, each drop of sweat. Since the laborer has God as his compeer, since the heart of a God knows from experience what it means to work, and is filled with sympathy for the lot of His toiling fellow man, every laborer may be proud of his work and may unite his labors to those of his divine Brother, and so offer them to the heavenly Father and accept from Him compensation for the possible insufficiency of his wages here below.

When Christ began His public life, He found Himself in the midst of a subjugated and deeply humiliated race. The Evangelist enumerates the rulers who exercised authority over Palestine in the name of the Roman Empire (cf. Lk. 3:1). In helpless fury the Jews cursed the loss of their political autonomy. They expected a Messiah who, as a mighty prince and savior, would free them from the Roman yoke. When Jesus declared that He was the Messiah sent of God, they were scandalized and said: "What, he the Messiah? Why, that is the well-known carpenter of Nazareth. His mother and relatives are here with us" (cf. Mk. 6:3). This blindness was the saddest sin of that age and race. The people had been led astray by their appointed leaders so that they placed all their hope in a glorious temporal future and hence despised the poor, humble Savior who wished to restore to them the kingdom of heaven. Did Jesus become angry at their lack of understanding? No, this great misery of His people elicited the more the compassion of His divine heart. "But seeing the crowds, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were

bewildered and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt. 9:36). He had the heart of a shepherd who has no other desire than to help a deserted flock. Nor was this longing limited to the Jews of Palestine, but embraced all those who in future centuries should need His help. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. . . . And other sheep I have that are not of this fold. Them also must I bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd, and for all of them I lay down My life" (Jn. 10:11, 16, 17).

He sought to win the confidence of the people through the favors He bestowed on them. He cured their sick, He fed them when they were hungry, He did not become impatient when they besieged Him so persistently that He and His disciples often could not so much as eat bread (cf. Mk. 3:20). Once He withdrew to a lonely spot in order to rest with His disciples. But the people noticed His departure and preceded Him so that in place of the rest He sought, He found new labors, which were concluded with the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (cf. Mk. 6:31-44). On another occasion, at the close of an arduous day, mothers brought their little ones to the weary Christ that He might bless them. The indignant apostles would have sent these inconsiderate women away had not Jesus rebuked them and said: "Let little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for of such is the kingdom of God"; and He pressed them to His heart and blessed them (Mk. 10:13, 14). Is not this love of little children a touching proof of the affability of His divine heart? Has He not given expression to His love for men when He said: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as the hen gathers her young under her wings, but thou wouldst not" (Mt. 23:37). Because of the hardness of heart of the Jews, Jesus shed tears of sympathy in the sorrow of His heart. "If thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes (Lk. 19:42). Finally, when in their blind rage they had crucified Him, He only prayed for them in their iniquity: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). Has our Savior proved sufficiently that He possesses a sympathetic, human heart?

3. *Should we not reward the love of our Savior with a return of sympathetic, human love?* Love and kindness, especially when they come from a superior, usually elicit from a noble heart sentiments of gratitude and love. Active sympathy with our miseries usually draws from us the resolve: I will never forget this. Will only the greatest love that ever burned in a human heart go unrequited? Will only the most self-sacrificing sympathy with our woe be relegated to forgetfulness? Will only our best Friend meet everywhere ice-incrusted hearts? Shall we compel only our Savior to make the bitter complaint: "What is there that I ought to have done, that I have not done?" (Cf. Isa. 5:4). "They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13). Their heart has become as a stone (cf. Ezek. 11:19). The life-giving warmth of love has grown cold in them.

Does not our Savior sigh with great longing for our love? "He who loves me will be loved of My Father: and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (Jn. 14:21). Our Savior explained to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque that nothing pained Him so much as the ingratitude of men. "This causes Me more suffering than I endured in the course of My passion. If men would but give Me some little return of love, I would consider all that I have done for them as nought and would, if it were possible, do yet more. But they reward all My efforts to help them with coldness and indifference."

"I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be enkindled?" (Lk. 12:49), are words Jesus addressed to His apostles. He spoke of the fire of the love of God, a holy fire, which is to be enkindled in all hearts and is to purify them from the slag of sin and imperfection so that only the pure gold of a true, noble, worthy love remains. For those, however, who resist the sanctifying influence of this divine love, it becomes a fire of judgment. The ungrateful will some day know that no fire burns so terribly

as the fire of the rejected love of God. All too late will these coldhearted unfortunates cry out: "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isa. 33:14.)

Dear Jesus, Thou dost still invite us to warm and purify our hearts in the life-giving furnace of Thy divine heart. Today, when we hear Thy voice, we will not harden our hearts, but strive with all our might that the dearest wish of Thy heart be granted and that Thou become better known and loved by men. O Jesus, grant us Thy love and Thy grace. With these we will be rich enough and will have no more to desire.

CHAPTER IV

A Generous Friend

*"I came that they may have life, and
may have it more abundantly" (Jn. 10:10).*

1. *The perfection of friendship embraces many degrees.* It is characteristic of all friendship that it is rooted in the love of benevolence and that service for a reward has no part in it. One who works for another for a wage cannot on this ground be called his friend no matter to what extent he procures the advantage of his employer. To work for wages is certainly not wrong. Inviolable fidelity in serving an employer, eagerness to satisfy one's obligations to him as perfectly as possible, are excellent qualities and even virtues in any servant or employee. Indeed, it may, and not infrequently does, happen that such complete dedication to the interests of the employer transcends the bounds of paid service and develops gradually into true friendship.

Our relationship to our divine Savior is of a similar nature. He is our God, and even in the most abject humiliation to which He has subjected Himself in His human nature for love of us, the majesty of His divinity remains untarnished. All angels and all men must serve Him, for the command: "Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God" is a fundamental law of nature from which God Himself cannot dispense a creature. Consequently, in our relationship to God, we must seek the answer to the question: "Who ... is the faithful and prudent servant?" (Mt. 24:45.) The sentence on the Day of Judgment will be: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many: enter thou into the joy of thy Master" (Mt. 25:21).

But this service, too, can transcend the bounds of labor for a reward; in fact, because of its very nature, it must develop into a true friendship. Our Savior, indeed, taught us to expect a reward for our good deeds; for the Son of man will come to judge all, "and then He will render to every one according to his conduct" (Mt. 16:27); "rejoice and exult, because your reward is great in heaven" (Mt. 5:12). And this great reward? What can it be if it be not God Himself? To possess God in perfect knowledge, love, and joy will be our reward. The perfection of our possession of God in heaven will be perfectly proportioned to the perfection of our service of Him while on earth. Just as star differs from star in glory, so, too, will the love of

God, the joy in the possession of God differ in each of the blessed. Nevertheless, each one will be perfectly happy, because each one possesses God to the full measure of his capacity obtained with the help of grace while on earth.

Hence our relation to God as His servants is, in the order of divine providence, the beginning of perfect friendship. We serve God to work out our salvation, that is, to be able one day so to know and love God that through this knowledge and love all the yearning of our heart for happiness may be satisfied. God Himself and His glorification through our knowledge and love of Him is the end of our service. Consequently, there is no opposition between our service of God with its resultant reward, and friendship with God. God has explicitly promised that He would love His faithful servants even in this life and come to them and make His abode with them (cf. Jn. 14:23). What is this if it be not friendship with us?

The greater the progress a soul makes in holiness, the more foreign to it becomes all thought of its own advantage, and the more God occupies the center of its thoughts and desires. Great, burning love is sufficient reward unto itself. It knows no other reward. There have been saints who loved God so intensely that they forgot themselves entirely and lived only in and for God. "Happy is the man," says St. Bernard, "who has advanced so far that he can love himself only for God's sake; who, intoxicated with divine love, forgets himself to hasten to God, to unite himself to Him, to become one spirit with Him. Such heights of sanctity are reached by but few here below. Hence, the Saint continues: "I call that man blessed to whom such an experience is accorded only occasionally or even but once in a lifetime for but one fleeting moment of time." But even if an individual could pass his whole life in such an ecstasy of love, it would, nevertheless, be true that the whole advantage of this purest love of God accrues to him, that he profits by it for all eternity, and that, in this instance also, his blessedness for all eternity is a reward exceeding great.

There is but one Man who loved and loves without compensation, who with all His love wishes only to secure the well-being and happiness of His friends, and who, therefore, possesses a purely unselfish, generous love of benevolence. This man is our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. *The love of our Savior toward us is actually a purely unselfish, generous love.* No man has ever actualized so fully the Scriptural dictum: "Charity . . . is not self-seeking" (1 Cor. 13:5). Christ, says the Apostle, did not please Himself, but for love of us underwent the greatest reproaches (cf. Rom. 15:3). He came to seek and to save that which was lost (cf. Lk. 19:10) and to lay down His life for His own (cf. Jn. 10:15). He sacrificed everything for our sakes.

What advantage could accrue to Christ because of His boundless love? Could we give Him anything that He did not have; or was it not rather the abyss of our misery and wretchedness which drew Him into our midst? From the heart of the mercy of God our Savior visited us, a veritable sun, which rose in the spiritual firmament to enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death (cf. Lk. 1:78, 79). Certainly the light could not expect to receive an increase of brightness from darkness, it could only communicate its brightness. Our Savior's lot was humiliation, hardship, suffering, and death on the cross; all the advantage was ours.

Or did Christ receive a reward for His noble, self-sacrificing love which was not already His due? What is it that puts Christ on a pinnacle, so that He is without comparison the most excellent of men? We speak here not of His divinity but only of His humanity. The most essential of all the prerogatives of Christ's humanity and the foundation of all the others is His intimate union with the divinity. Did the humanity of Christ receive this divine prerogative as a reward for its merits? Certainly not. At the very first moment of its existence, the humanity of Christ was united to the divinity. This union, therefore, was not to be, nor could it be, merited. Merit presupposes existence; the humanity of Christ, however, never had

existed independently of the Second Person of the Trinity, but only in this divine Person. Hence it could not first merit and then be united to this Person. This union with a divine person was an unmerited gift of grace for the humanity of Christ.

In this personal union with the divinity, the right to all the other divine prerogatives is contained. Hence, even as a babe in the crib at Bethlehem, Jesus enjoyed the beatific vision in such fullness as is never accorded to a mere creature. Could God have denied to the humanity of Christ, even temporarily, that vision which at the same time He accorded the angels, subjects of the heavenly King far below Him? For in Christ we do not find two Sons of God, one by nature, whom the Father generated from all eternity, and one by adoption; no, Christ according to His human and divine nature is the only Son of God, the only-begotten Son of the Father. Hence, even according to His humanity, the inheritance of heaven and of eternal felicity is His by birthright; He need not first merit this reward.

Nevertheless it is true that the beatific vision was enjoyed by Christ only in the superior part of His soul during His life on earth; His body and even His soul insofar as it was the principle of the life of the body had as yet no part in this beatitude. That Christ renounced for our sakes these secondary effects of the beatific vision in order that He might suffer and die for us, is an incomprehensible mystery of His love for us. The Apostle makes use of this conduct of our Savior to exemplify how true love seeks not its own advantage but that of others. For this is the mind of Christ who had no need to consider it robbery to be equal with God, but who could have manifested externally the glory of God which dwelt within Him. But He preferred to deprive Himself of this glory on His appearance in the midst of men and to hide the splendor of the divine majesty which dwelt within Him. He assumed the form of a servant and in externals was found capable of suffering as other men (cf. Phil. 2:5 ff). Indeed, the least of men, a worm and no man was He found at the time of His sacred passion.

We must concede, of course, that as a result Christ could, to a certain extent, merit the glorification of His humanity and the honor of His name; more, it is certain that He did. "We see Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of His having suffered death" (Heb. 2:9). Because He was obedient even unto the death of the cross "God also has exalted Him, and has bestowed upon Him a name that is above every name; so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth: and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

In regard to this merit, however, two considerations must not be forgotten. First, we did not reward Christ for His merits. We have not transfigured His body nor glorified His name. Christ never expected nor received any advantage from us. In our regard Christ is wholly an unselfish friend who wishes to give without any prospect of ever receiving.

Second, the merits of Christ are by no means a necessary condition for His acquiring the gifts of God as is the case with us. His merits simply constitute a new title, but by no means the first or the most essential title. All the glory that Christ merited for His humanity belonged to it even without merit, because He is by nature the Son of God. Christ once prayed:

"And now do Thou, Father, glorify Me" (Jn. 17:5); but He added at once: "with the glory that I had with Thee before the world existed." This glory the Son possessed long before there was question of any merit; in itself it is also a prerogative of His humanity. But of this glory He deprived Himself for a time in order that He might be able to suffer and to die for us. At the end of His mortal life He again demanded it of His heavenly Father, first, as His just inheritance and, secondly, as a reward for His obedient fulfillment of the divine will. Even among men there is the proverb: "Earn the inheritance of your father to possess it."

In other words, make yourself, through your own efforts, worthy of the inheritance which is yours by disposition of fortune, so that it may be yours by a twofold title, that of inheritance and of desert. This is proportionately the glory of our divine Savior, yet with this difference: Human inheritance is subject to chance; the inheritance of our Savior is essentially as necessary as God Himself. Consequently the proposition that the love of our Savior for us is a love absolutely noble and unselfish, and that by all His wonderful deeds this love sought not its own advantage but only our profit is absolutely true.

3. *What will be our attitude toward this generous love of Jesus?* The love by its very nature demands a return of love; generosity enkindles generosity'. Only the craven heart is able to forget great and noble proofs of generous love, to take up an attitude of miserly craving for personal profit, and always to demand first: what shall I gain for my return of love? Our hearts in themselves are small and puny, our ability to love so weak that we are not able, even with all our energies, to return the smallest proof of love on God's part. "God is greater than our heart." says St. John (1 Jn. 3:20). We do not merely owe our Savior this or that, we owe Him *everything*; and greater than all the created gifts that we have received from Him is the divinely human and humanly divine love of His Sacred Heart. We are indebted to Him for all that we are, because He has created us; we are doubly indebted to Him because He has redeemed us, and redeemed us so willingly and superabundantly; we are indebted to Him infinitely, so far as that is possible to finite creatures, because He has given us the priceless love of His Sacred Heart.

In view of all this, dare we still ask: "What will I get if I return such love with love?" Well, even this question is easily answered. Eventually the whole human race will be divided into two unequal groups both of which must appear before Jesus to do Him homage; one group, His blessed friends, will honor Him through beatific love, the other, His humbled enemies, will honor Him in helpless rage. But both must bow their knees before Him, those who are in heaven and those who are under the earth (cf. Phil. 2:10). We must, while here on earth, determine to which of these two groups we wish to belong. This is the answer to the question: "What will it profit us, if we love our Savior?" Of this, however, we shall speak no more. We shall henceforth consider the question: "What ought our conduct to be in regard to the noble love of the heart of Jesus, that love which is so unselfish, which seeks in all things not its own advantage but rather our greater good?"

After Jesus had on one occasion fed more than five thousand people in the desert, many of them returned to Him the next day. We should imagine that this return would have gladdened His loving heart. But no, He reproaches them severely. "You seek Me, not because you have seen miracles and now wish to believe that I am the Messiah sent by God, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled (cf. Jn. 6:26). You hope to receive again perishable food. This is the sum and substance of your love of Me." Alas, this tribe of seekers after the Lord has not yet perished. There are still hearts, craven hearts, who say: "I will follow Christ as long as He prospers me in temporal concerns, as long as He satisfies my wants and makes me rich, as long as He grants me health and wards off all sorrow and affliction." Shall we address such sentiments to the Savior, who, during His temporal life, sacrificed for love of us all the riches and pleasures of earth, and chose instead poverty, labor, humiliations, and pains; who drained the chalice of suffering to the last bitter dregs?

How can we approach our divine Friend unblushingly with sentiments other than those of unconditioned devotion? My Savior, what can I do to please Thee? Tell me, and with the help of Thy grace I will fulfill Thy every wish at all costs. For love of Thee, I shall keep Thy commandments, avoid sin, love all men, even my enemies for Thy sake, suffer adversities of whatever kind which Thou in Thy providence mayest send me, and carry my cross daily after Thee. The greater the nobility and generosity of our

dealings with our Savior, the greater, too, will be the effects of His nobility on our lives. He will see to our greater advantage even in temporal affairs. Yet we do not wish to be His friends on this account: we shall strive rather to become strangers to all love of self in His regard; to grow daily in unselfish, perfect surrender to His love, so that we may outgrow all earthly weaknesses and attain some measure of that generosity with which the heart of our Savior is filled toward us. Then our life will be not our own, but the life of Christ Jesus in us.

CHAPTER V

A True Friend

“Let us not love in word; neither with the tongue, but in deed and in truth” (Jn. 3:18).

1. *If the acid test of friendship were its verbal affirmation, how many friends we should have!*

Affirmations of wholehearted devotion are exchanged on all sides, and everyone takes them for what they are, mere polite conventionalities. The necessities of daily life frequently bring certain men into a closer relationship; they get to know each other better than they know most other men; they exchange their thoughts, discuss their plans and prospects and the pleasant or unpleasant incidents of their daily lives; occasionally they may give each other a bit of good advice and even render each other some service of friendship; in short, they consider each other acquaintances, and may even call each other friends. Yet, strictly speaking, they are not friends at all. Their relationship is merely an intimacy brought about by circumstances in which deliberate choice had no part, an intimacy which may cease at any moment even as it began.

When men have experienced the help of others in important affairs, how often they call the service rendered the act of a friend, and speak of eternal, grateful friendship. Let us assume that their affirmations are sincere and that, in the given instance, the services rendered are mutual; let us assume, moreover, that such reciprocal assistance develops into a permanent relationship of mutual assistance; then, in a certain restricted sense, the one is a friend of the Other; utilitarian considerations unite the two; they are business friends, but not simply friends.

Friendship is a communion of souls based on mutual esteem, and finds its expression in the communication of immaterial treasures. Participation in the outward circumstances of life, the desire for one another's companionship, assistance in trials and difficulties, gifts, expressions of love, all these are natural expressions of true friendship, but do not constitute its essence. This consists rather in the interior union of one with another, the surrendering of one's whole being to another. Strong emotions are not necessary, much less passionate attachment, which would rather betray that other factors than real

friendship are at play. True friendship is not unreasoning sentimentality. It demands calm consideration of the reasons which make our friend worthy of our esteem and devotion.

Infidelity in a friend is so bitter, precisely because by it the soul is wounded in its inmost being and, as it were, torn limb from limb. And yet how frequent such disappointments are in human friendship. One of three reasons accounts for such disappointments. It may be that the faithless friend has attained the eminence of friendship through cunning and clever hypocrisy, or that the friendship was concluded lightly and with but superficial knowledge, or, finally, that the friend degenerated and no longer deserves the esteem and love which was bestowed on him in his better days. Much experience and knowledge of men, not always at one's command, is necessary to guard oneself from a consummate hypocrite. To be able to forecast the future fidelity or infidelity of a friend is still more difficult. But all can do one thing to spare themselves as much as possible the bitter pang of infidelity in a friend. They can proceed cautiously and allow sufficient time for the growth of friendship.

Friendship is not like a commercial transaction which, after the necessary consideration and calculation, may be concluded at any time. It is rather like a precious flower which grows in the fruitful soil of mutual recognition and esteem, and gradually reaches ultimate maturity under the bright sunshine of reciprocal benevolence. But assurance of its indestructible vitality we may gather only after it has proved itself in the fulfillment of the pleasant and unpleasant duties of friendship, after it has remained constant in fair weather and during storms, in good fortune and evil fortune, in joy and in sorrow. Only after it has matured in this fashion does friendship ripen to that perfect fruit which is one of the most precious treasures of earth. In the ardor of youth a newly formed friendship may give rise to jubilant enthusiasm impossible in later years. But as regards moral excellence, interior worth and strength, an old and tried friendship surpasses all youthful, enthusiastic friendships. Its ardor is no longer displayed externally, but glows the more warmly within. An old and tried friend is a treasure that cannot easily be valued too highly. He must be to thee as thyself, a medicine for life and immortality (cf. Eccles. 6:11-16).

Let us consider now whether our divine Savior, who desires our friendship, is such a true Friend, One whose fidelity it would be criminal to doubt and on whose friendship it would be madness not to build as on a rock.

2. *Jesus is a true friend* who has never under any circumstances deserted a faithful friend. In the year 155 of the Christian era, the aged Bishop Polycarp was summoned at Smyrna before a heathen judge, who demanded that he deny and spurn Christ. Polycarp answered: "I have served Him for sixty-eight years and He has never yet done me an injury. How can I revile my King who has redeemed me?" In this instance an old friend proved his fidelity to his Friend: and before his death he received a final proof of friendship from that Friend. While the aged Bishop was standing on the pyre and the flames burst forth beneath his feet, they formed a halo round about him like sails bellied by the wind and did not touch him. The saint stood in their midst as though glorified. The people were astonished and moved at this spectacle, which ended only after the executioner had plunged his sword into the bishop's breast. Christ was faithful to His faithful servant even in his last extremity; He glorified him before all the people, granted him the grace of martyrdom, and conducted him as glorious conqueror into heaven.

It is an article of faith that Christ deserts no man who does not first desert Him. [footnote: Cone. Trid., Sess. 6, C. 11.] What proofs did Christ give of such friendship during His life on earth? We know that He lived and died for us. But let us consider in detail how He dealt with His friends. In the first place, He clearly and without subterfuge told all who wished to be His friends that they need expect no material advantage from His friendship. Their portion rather would be to carry their cross daily to the end of their

lives. He even predicted persecution and a martyr's death for His privileged disciples (cf. Mt. 10:17 ff). Consequently, He does not wish to coax anyone into becoming His friend by false representations and by concealment of the facts. No, He declares honestly and openly that friendship with Him implies many things that are hard and distasteful to the natural man.

On the other hand, however, does He offer us the cross and say: "Carry it, I wish to see whether you have courage and perseverance"? By no means. He puts the heaviest cross on His own shoulders and says: "Follow Me. I shall carry the heaviest cross Myself for your salvation, but do you follow in My footsteps, each with his own cross; it is a hard way, but it is the way of life and will bring you unspeakable joy" (cf. Lk. 14:26, 27; Mt. 16:24 ff.). Was Christ faithful to His promise to go before us on this way even to the end? One look at the crucifix gives us the answer to that question. Faithful unto death!

He has given us the assurance that, if we, confiding in His assistance, will but carry our much lighter cross for love of Him, He will help us with His grace so that our cross will be a sweet yoke and a light burden (cf. Mt. 11:30). This promise, too, our Savior has kept, indeed the more gloriously in proportion to the fire of love that burned in the hearts of His followers. The saints did not ask to be delivered from suffering, but like St. Francis Xavier prayed: "More, Lord, more suffering." If we read the Epistles of St. Paul, we shall find them pæans of joy, glorifications of the happiness of suffering with Christ (cf. Rom. 8:16-39; 2 Cor. 4:16 ff; 11:22-31). Christ has always proved His friendship toward His followers by permitting in His providence only such trials to overtake them as were for their salvation, trials which He helped them to bear with His grace. Even during His life on earth, He took the part of His apostles and protected them from their enemies. When His persecutors wished to lay violent hands on them in the Garden of Olives, He said: "I have told you that I am He. If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way" (Jn. 18:8). He wished to suffer alone the death on the cross for our salvation. For His apostles the time for bloody suffering had not yet come. Furthermore, He not only warded off premature suffering from them, but He always lovingly supplied all their wants. The day before His death, He asked them: "When I sent you out on your apostolic missions without human means, did you want for anything?" They answered: "Nothing" (cf. Lk. 22:35, 36).

When He was about to be separated from His apostles, and the shadows of death lay heavily on His heart, even then He seemed to have no time to think of His own sufferings, but sought only to lessen the grief of separation for them: "Because I have told you that I must depart from you, sorrow has filled your heart. Yet it is expedient for you that I go; for after My departure the Holy Ghost will come and give you unspeakable joy" (cf. Jn. 16:6, 7). "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you. ... Do not let your heart be troubled, or be afraid" (Jn. 14:27). Ordinarily it is the dying who are comforted by their friends; on this occasion, however, He who is doomed to death consoles His friends who will survive Him. Truly this is touching fidelity even unto death of the love of the heart of Jesus.

He promises, too, that He will not forget them after His death. "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (Jn. 14:18). He returns to them after His resurrection to allow them to share in His joy. For forty days He delays His ascension into heaven, and fills their hearts with a consolation which will endure for the remainder of their lives. Our loving Savior died for our sins, He rose for our justification (cf. Rom. 4:25). in order that we might begin a new, pure life with the assistance of His grace, a life which is to find its consummation with Him in eternal glory.

Hence He could justly say before His ascension: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Mt. 28:20). I am always with you in thought. Christ lives in heaven to be mindful of us always, and to make intercession for us (cf. Heb. 7:25), to be our advocate with the Father

(cf. Jn. 2:1). He has engraven each one of us in His hands and feet, but more especially in His heart with the indelible characters of the marks of His wounds which are a ceaseless and might} plea for mercy for us all. "Can a woman forget her infant so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee in My hands" (Isa. 49:15, 16). Let us gaze on the marks of these wounds and ask ourselves if our Savior can forget us. He thinks of us day and night without ceasing. Moreover, He is in our midst by His grace-giving activity in His Church. Whenever a sacrament is administered, the priest does indeed place an outward act, but the real, active minister is Christ Himself. He accompanies us through life with His sacraments; and beyond the grave He will pennit us to drink draughts of joy from His Sacred Heart. Even now a fountain of grace wells up from this Sacred Heart and flows over into all human hearts which are prepared to receive it. Our Savior is in our midst in countless tabernacles the world over, even to the end of time, to grant us an audience as often as we desire; nor need we first announce our coming or comply with human conventionalities. He is with His Church in her office as teacher to preserve her from all error in matters of faith. He protects His Church so that the most violent persecution on the part of her enemies will not prevail against her. He daily carries out the promise that He made when He said: "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). A life-giving fountain of grace and love streams forth from His heart, a mystic blood stream which pulsates through all His members; anyone not animated by this stream is spiritually dead. Thus has our Savior proved His fidelity for nineteen centuries.

At the close of the last century, the Church honored the fidelity of our Savior by consecrating herself and the whole human race to the best of all friends, the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We are consecrated to this Sacred Heart; hence, we must, on our part, prove our fidelity to His friendship, and, in accordance with His wishes, strive that devotion to this divine heart attain luxurious growth both in ourselves and in others.

3. *The love of our Savior toward us is proved by the fact that He leads us to heaven.* He did not descend from heaven in order to enrich us with temporal goods, but in order to take us to heaven with Himself. If immunity from all evils and the enjoyment of all pleasures were a necessary complement to service of the Savior, how very many servants He would have! But would these servants be His friends? No, not friends, but selfish, grasping souls. And even our Savior would not be our friend if He dealt with us in this fashion, for He Himself has said that we cannot serve God and mammon (cf. Mt. 6:24). Temporal goods must be our servants, means to an end, while we must serve only God. If we demean ourselves and become the slaves of material tilings, we lose God and suffer the loss of our souls. "For what does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Mt. 16:26.) Christ came into the world to save our souls. "I came that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (Jn. 10:10). Christ taught us by word and example the way to eternal life, the path of renunciation of the temporal, and the striving after the heavenly, after the eternal possession of God, our final end. It is precisely in this that our Savior has proved Himself our true Friend, by liberating our thoughts and desires from the dust of earth and directing them to those eternal heights where alone our true happiness may be found.

He has preceded us to these heights and has there taken Possession of His kingdom, not for Himself alone but also for His friends. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again, and I will take you to Myself; that where I am. there you also may be" (Jn. 14:2, 3). "Father. I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me; in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me" (Jn. 17:24). This is the uninterrupted prayer of the Sacred Heart for His own. Until the day of consummation He will prove Himself their friend. One who cares for their salvation. Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father intercedes for us. No alien power can

destroy the love with which He loves us and which He enkindles in our hearts. Or “who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? . . . But in all these things we overcome because of Him who has loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:35 ff.).

May these words of the Apostle be verified in us. They will be verified if we are detennined with the help of His grace to prove our friendship for Jesus even as He has proved His for us. O Jesus, fulfill in us also the promise that Thou hast made to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, namely that Thou wilt not permit a soul to perish which consecrates itself to Thy Sacred Heart and zealously cultivates and propagates devotion toward it.

CHAPTER VI

An Amiable Friend

*“And all. . . marvelled at the words of
grace that came from His mouth ” (Lk. 4:22).*

1. *Amiability is an estimable characteristic of every friend.* We may speak of amiability in a twofold sense. In the first sense, it may signify those moral virtues which make a man worthy of esteem and love. Such amiability is essential to all friendship. In the second sense, it may signify that quality or combination of qualities through which their possessor exercises a magnetic influence over others, because it is pleasant and agreeable to deal with him. [footnote: Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* II, 2ae, q. 114, a. 1.] It is usually in this latter sense that we speak of an amiable person. Hence, an amiable individual is one possessed of exquisite manners, thoughtful consideration for the requirements of pleasant companionship, considerate yielding to the wishes of others, the gift of conversation; in short, social adaptability without affectation or ignoble flattery. If, in addition to these qualities, their possessor has an attractive figure, he is the living embodiment of the ideal, amiable person. We presume, of course, that his friendliness is sincere and not merely a veneer, for should he mock interiorly at those before whom he simulates fine manners, he would not be an amiable person but a disgusting hypocrite. Trueheartedness and fundamental honesty of soul are prerequisites for all amiability worthy of the name.

It is true that an attractive figure and fine manners are not essential requisites for friendship, for even in an ugly body a morally beautiful soul may dwell, and a rough exterior often conceals a heart of inestimable worth. Social charm has been denied to many by nature, while labor, care, and the hardships of life have made others externally as hard as steel, though they possess faithful, friendly hearts and are esteemed and honored as friends by those who see through the rough exterior to their moral qualifies.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that amiability, when combined with moral excellence, is well suited to increase friendship and surround it with a peculiar charm.

Is our divine Savior amiable? There is no question of His moral excellence, for in this He immeasurably surpasses all, even the best of men. We may inquire, however, whether our Savior possesses that attractiveness of manner which by itself is calculated to draw all hearts. If our Savior were to appear in our midst, even for a short time, and were to deal with us in visible form, we would have the answer to our question. But His amiability is so great that He cannot display it in all its perfection here below if He does not wish to diminish greatly the merit of our devotion toward Him. During His sojourn on earth He was compelled to hide His amiability under a veil in order that men might not be enslaved by His external attractiveness and lose sight of weightier considerations.

Once only during His stay on earth did He take three of His apostles to Mount Thabor and lift for a moment the veil which hid His glory. Rapt in ecstasy at this vision, Peter cried out: "Lord, it is good for us to be here. Let us build here our dwellings." However, the Evangelist adds that he knew not what he said (cf. Lk. 9:28 ff.). The charming attractiveness of his Master had, for the time, all but bereft him of the use of reason. Here we can see why Christ veiled His amiability. The enjoyment of the contemplation of the glorified humanity of Christ is a gratification that is to form part of the joys of heaven and not of our exile here below, it was necessary even to purify the apostles from a too-natural attachment to the person of Christ, veiled though it was, before they could receive the Holy Ghost, "it is expedient for you that I depart; for if I do not go, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you" (Jn. 16:7).

Even after His resurrection our Savior did not show Himself in all His glory, but allowed merely a few rays to escape occasionally, which filled the hearts of His disciples with enthusiasm. Thus, for example, on the day of His ascension. Even after our Savior had disappeared from view, the disciples could not tear their eyes away, but stood staring up into heaven, anxious to see even the last reflection of the glorious spectacle, until the angels came and admonished them to return to Jerusalem and do as they had been bidden (cf. Acts 1:10, 11). "And they adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy" (Lk. 24:52) at the glory of the Lord that they had seen. "We saw," wrote St. John jubilantly, "His glory — glory as of the only-begotten of the Father" (Jn. 1:14).

The magnetism of creatures which appeals to our bodily senses may easily enthrall our hearts in such wise that our love for our Savior will suffer in consequence. Hence it is of paramount importance never to forget that Christ is the most amiable of men. It is our destiny to enjoy the unsurpassed amiability of Jesus for all eternity, and to draw therefrom unspeakable delights. How senseless it would be, then, to sacrifice this eternal joy or even to diminish it for the sake of some creature whose charm is doomed soon to return to the dust from which it came. Let us try, then, to form as perfect an image as possible of the amiability of our glorified Savior, and to impress this image so indelibly in our hearts that the allurements of creatures may not prevail against it. We must learn to enjoy our Savior.

2. *The amiability of our glorified Savior.* In the forty-fourth psalm, which, according to the Apostle (cf. Heb. 1:8, 9), refers to the Messiah, we read of Him in His glory: "Thou art beautiful above the sons of men: grace is poured abroad in Thy lips. . . . Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most Mighty. With Thy comeliness and Thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously and reign. Because of truth and meekness and justice. . . . Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. Myrrh and stacte and cassia perfume Thy garments." The inspired poet seems at a loss for words to depict adequately the amiability of our heavenly King which surpasses all human comprehension.

St. Teresa tells in the twenty-eighth chapter of her *Autobiography* that the risen Savior once appeared to her in vision. She admits that she is unable to describe Him as He is, but she desires, nevertheless, to clothe her vision in words as best she may. She tells us that if there were no other joy in heaven than the contemplation of the humanity of Christ, this alone would constitute an unutterable delight. I might have striven for years to imagine anything so beautiful and would, nevertheless, have failed. His lucidity and radiance alone surpass our comprehension. The radiance of His glory does not blind the eye. but is a wonderful shimmering whiteness, which thrills the eyes and does not tire them. His lucidity is simply a divine beauty. Even the brightness of the sun is darkness when compared with the light which emanates from Jesus. He who gazes upon this light is filled with a desire not to open his eyes again nor to gaze at anything else. It is as though we gazed into clear water running over crystal in which the sun is reflected. In comparison with it, mundane beauty is a murky stream swollen by rains which flows over a muddy bed. The beauty of our Savior is a pure light, an undimmed light, a light that never wanes. It is of the greatest importance to impress this beauty of our Savior deeply on our memory and intellect to support them in their weakness.

This prerogative of the glorified humanity of Christ of which St. Teresa here speaks is that quality which St. Paul calls "glory" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:43; Phil. 3:21). The evangelists, speaking of the transfiguration, mention a brightness like that of the sun and a whiteness as that of snow (Mt. 17:2).

There is, however, yet another loveliness of the glorified humanity of Christ, which the Apostle designates as spirituality (1 Cor. 15:44). This is the transcendence of the spirit over matter or rather the perfect permeation and elevation of matter by the spirit. We can form some conception of this if we compare two different kinds of human beauty. There is a rough, almost exclusively bodily beauty which consists in the correct proportion of the features and all the members, combined with a healthy, strong color — an almost soulless beauty. Then there is another beauty, the elements of which are the impress of benevolence on noble features, a light in the eyes that bespeaks a keen intellect, and a firmness of countenance that betrays a strong will. This latter is, properly speaking, human beauty, a spiritual beauty, which, no doubt, does not cause as much sensible pleasure, but, nevertheless, attracts more powerfully and may enkindle enthusiastic devotion. This beauty, because it is essentially spiritual, can stamp even on an ugly countenance the seal of beauty.

The body of our divine Savior was formed by the Holy Ghost in a wonderful manner (cf. Lk. 1:35). When we build a church in God's honor, we try to make it as beautiful as is possible under the given circumstances. Therefore, is it probable that the Holy Ghost fashioned an imperfect body when He built a temple for the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity? After the final resurrection of the dead, will not the King of Glory immeasurably surpass in the beauty of His body and in the charm of His personality all the inhabitants of heaven? And this perfect body is animated by a noble soul. The fullness of grace and virtue radiates from the countenance of the Savior. The saints have received a little of His fullness, He alone possesses it all: a most beautiful body transformed by a glorious soul, and the soul elevated by the divinity. When we shall have the happiness to see our Savior in heaven as He is, we shall not tire of this vision for all eternity. What folly, then, to give heed here below to any amiability which can tempt us away from this eternally youthful, divine amiability.

So perfectly is the body of Christ spiritualized that no trace of earthly grossness remains in it. We contemplate with pleasure and light, charming movements of a supple body. Now the body of our Lord is swift as thought, a perfectly responsive instrument of the will, each nerve and muscle responding in all movements to the exact desire of the soul; while the soul desires only expressions of the most refined

propriety, impressive dignity, and enchanting charm. And all this is immortal, imperishable, eternal. Let us, then, love this divinely human beauty as it deserves to be loved. Let us pennit it to draw our desires heavenward. When we are in the state of sanctifying grace, a wonderful, heavenly beauty also dwells in us; but externally it is not yet visible. We may console ourselves, however, like St. John the Apostle with the coming of the Lord. Then "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him just as He is" (1 Jn. 3:2).

3. *The amiability of our Savior is especially manifested in His revelation of the devotion to the Sacred Heart.* Human friendships are so inconstant because there are no perfect men. If failings manifest themselves at psychologically the wrong moment and in a disagreeable manner, only the strongest of friendships will survive them. How often, alas, have friendships of long standing been dissolved because of one thoughtless word, a single offense, a slight betrayal of confidence, made perchance in good faith.

How does our Savior act? When He appeared to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, He complained that men, on whom He had bestowed so many incomprehensibly great benefits, were becoming colder, more careless, more ungrateful and disrespectful toward Him: that they rewarded His love with hatred and blasphemy, and that they combated His works and intentions. As a result of these bitter and long-continued insults to His love, what course of conduct might we expect our Savior to pursue? Will He not deprive men of His friendship, cast them from Him, and permit them to fall prey to that doom toward which they are infallibly rushing? "Christ permitted me," writes St. Margaret, "to perceive the ardent desire which consumes Him to be loved by men, to withdraw them from the path of destruction toward which so many of them are tending. This desire it was which caused Him to manifest His heart with all the treasures of love, mercy, and grace which it contains." Such is the return of the Savior for all the great offenses which are offered His love by men. He does not consider the injustice which is done Himself, but rather the evil consequences which the contemptible conduct of men draws down upon themselves. His love is only fanned to a brighter flame by these insults; they compel Him to pour out yet richer treasures of grace so that He may eventually soften men's hearts and win them for that love which alone constitutes their whole happiness. Can we conceive of greater amiability? He bears patiently all the wrongs inflicted by His friends; instead of becoming angry and disgusted, He shows compassion and invents new proofs of love; instead of withdrawing His friendship forever, He plans new ways and means to strengthen it and make it more intimate.

How obviously true are the words of our Savior when He says that the manifestation of the love of His heart is a final attempt to win the hearts of men. After all the graces that He has bestowed on us what else could He do except manifest His Sacred Heart and offer it to men as a gift? He offers us His heart, that we may offer Him ours. A heart for a heart. But what manner of exchange is this? He demands our heart, our small, weak, inconstant, sinful heart. Is it perhaps to enrich Himself? He finds in us nothing but poverty, misery, and need of assistance, it is precisely on our littleness that He gazes in order to elevate it, on our weakness to strengthen it, on our illness in order to cure it. It is the sick who need a physician (cf. Mk. 2:17), and as the panacea for these spiritual diseases, our Savior offers His heart, a heart full of love and mercy, of strength and life, of happiness and beatitude. The highest expression of love toward another is that a man offer Him his heart. So loving is our Savior that, despite all our infidelities. He wishes to give us His heart. Let us accept this gift, let us consider it as our most precious treasure, let us honor it and pay it homage! Let us live in this heart, and living in it we shall "taste, and see that the Lord is sweet" (Ps. 33:9).

CHAPTER VII

A Wise Friend

*“Christ Jesus, who has become for
us God-given wisdom” (1 Cor. 1:30).*

1. *One of the advantages of friendship is that in our friend we have one to whom we may turn for advice* even in embarrassments of a secret nature, which we should not care to reveal to anyone else. No one is so self-sufficient that he never has need of advice. The greater the good that is at stake, the more desirable is wise counsel. What goods are greater than those eternal treasures on which our ultimate happiness or unhappiness depends? And yet the path that leads to them cannot always be easily and surely found. Many, yes, very many, have gone astray because they relied too much on their own discretion. Hence, the Holy Ghost warns us: “Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not upon thy own prudence. In all thy ways think on Him, and He will direct thy steps. Be not wise in thy own conceit” (Prov. 3:5-7). And the Apostle writes to the Romans: “... condescend to the lowly. Be not wise in your own conceits” (12:16); do not cherish an idle, self-sufficient confidence in your own judgment, but open your hearts to good advice. This is the same doctrine that our Lord taught when He repeatedly emphasized that self-sufficient conceit prevented the scribes and Pharisees from entering the kingdom of God: “I praise Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent, and didst reveal them to little ones” (Mt. 11:25). God does not hate wisdom and prudence which really deserve the name, but He does abominate that false, proud, complacent, worldly wisdom which deems itself in no need of counsel and direction.

Wise direction is especially necessary in the spiritual life, because a threefold obstacle makes discernment in spiritual matters exceedingly difficult. In the first place, we live in the midst of others who profess and follow principles different from our own. Now, it is hard, in fact well-nigh impossible, not to be influenced by our surroundings. Hence, even man is to a certain extent a child of his age and is influenced by its views and aims. However much these aims and views may change in other matters, in one respect the majority of men, whom our Lord designates as the *world*, never changes. They are always opposed to the doctrine of Christ; harbor only hate and ridicule for its followers, and continually flaunt before them the principles of independent thought and material progress as the only ones worthy of man. Do we not daily hear from a thousand quarters that we Christians are a backward race, a pitiable group of stultified idiots? We need not marvel at this attitude of the world, for it has been predicted by our Lord (cf. Jn. 15:18 ff). Nevertheless, it is difficult to live in the pestilential atmosphere of false principles without becoming contaminated.

The second obstacle to a truly Christian philosophy and conduct of life originates with those whom St. Paul calls, “the world-rulers of this darkness” (Eph. 6:12). These spirits are the rulers of that world which is inimical to Christ, and which, consequently, is still sunk in the darkness and shadow of death. Masters of deception, they are very adept in implanting in our hearts those plausible shibboleths which their votaries so constantly din into our ears. They follow their leader, Satan, the master of all liars

(cf. Jn. 8:44). If we are not careful, if in our pride we rely too much on our own wisdom, we shall succumb to these suggestions and imperceptibly adopt views and principles directly opposed to Christ. Hence, St. Peter warns us to be on our guard against this adversary, who continually goes about seeking whom he may devour (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8). This spirit, according to St. Paul, is active in all the children of unbelief (cf. Eph. 2:2), Whose wisdom is foolishness with God (cf. 1 Cor. 3:19).

The world and the princes of this world, the evil spirits, have a powerful ally in our nature with its inordinate impulses and undisciplined passions. The law of our members, which is opposed to the law of our mind (cf. Rom. 7:23), darkens our intellect and prompts us to hold desirable that which in reality is detestable. Our disordered inclinations make us blind whenever there is question of objects that cause us either pleasure or pain. Since many things forbidden by God are pleasant to our fallen nature and it is painful to carry our cross daily after the example of our Savior, we seek pretexts to avoid the one and to attain the other. Consequently, under the cross-fire of the false principles of the world and the deceptive promptings of the devil, our souls are in danger of suffering serious harm. However, we must not become discouraged; we have a wise Friend, who can counsel us in all dangers and difficulties, and who will never deny us His assistance if we go to Him with confidence.

2. *Heart of Jesus, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, have mercy on us!* Thus we pray when we recite the Litany of the Sacred Heart. In the heart of Jesus dwells the personal, divine Wisdom, which pours into the humanity of Christ the fullness of knowledge. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory — glory . . . full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). One man only could say without blasphemy, "I am the truth" (Jn. 14:6). In Christ Jesus there is no error or ignorance, but only the clearest knowledge of the past, present, and future. He knows our thoughts, wishes, desires, resolutions, intentions, words, and deeds. He knows the difficulties and temptations with which we have to contend, and sees how energetically or negligently we strive against them. No pain that we endure is hidden from Him; He is at our side to see whether we carry our cross after His example with resignation and courage, or whether we murmur and complain and only unwillingly keep to the way of the cross. Our Savior sees all of us individually as if that one were the only object of all His attention. No necessity compels Him to interrupt even for an instant this contemplation. Day and night His gaze rests upon us; nothing, great or small, escapes Him.

And how could it be otherwise? We confess: "I believe in Jesus Christ, who will come to judge the living and the dead." Our Lord said: "For neither doth the Father judge any man, but all judgment He has given to the Son" (Jn. 5:22), because He is the Son of man (cf. Jn. 5:27); for since He is the Redeemer of all, it is fitting that He should demand an account from all of how they have used the grace of redemption. For this reason, He commanded the apostles, as St. Peter emphasizes, "to preach to the people, and to testify that He it is who has been appointed by God, to be judge of the living and of the dead" (Acts 10:42). "Then will He render to everyone according to his conduct" (Mt. 16:27). He will judge not only external deeds (cf. Mt. 25:35 ff.), but all words (cf. Mt. 12:36) and thoughts. For the thoughts of the heart are the source of all sin (cf. Mt. 15:19); the external act is sinful only insofar as it proceeds from an evil heart, and good only insofar as it proceeds from a good heart. Our Savior's answer to the blasphemies of the Pharisees makes this plain: "You brood of vipers, how can you speak good things, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man from his good treasure brings forth good things; and the evil man from his evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Mt. 12:34, 35). When our Lord will come to judge, He "will bring to light the things hidden in darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of hearts" (1 Cor. 4:5).

What conclusion must we draw from the fact that our Savior is judge of the world? Since He is a just judge (cf. 2 Tim. 4:8) and His judgments are just (cf. 2 Thess. 1:5 ff), and since He renders to all the proper tilings according to their works (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10), it follows that He must possess an accurate knowledge of all our thoughts, desires, and deeds with all their circumstances; for no man can judge justly in a cause of which he knows nothing. Hence our Judge says of Himself: "And if I do judge, My judgment is true" (Jn. 8:16). "I am He that searches desires and hearts, and I will give to each of you according to your works" (Apoc. 2:23). Consequently, our Savior knows us through and through, our internal as well as external deeds; He watches over us constantly, nothing escapes His vigilance, and nothing is forgotten.

3. *Our Savior watches over us during our sojourn here below not as our Judge hut as our Redeemer.* "I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world" (Jn. 12:47). The judgment comes only after death (cf. Heb. 9:27). Here below the wisdom and knowledge of the heart of Jesus is a treasure on which all who fly to Him confidently as to their friend may draw in all doubts and difficulties. Jesus is the light "which enlighteneth eveiy man that cometh into this world" (Jn. 1:3) who wishes to be enlightened. If we stand in need of the light of life — and we all do — let us go to Jesus, and pray with the Church: "O Jesus, Light of salvation, enlighten the depths of our souls." [footnote: "O sol salutis, intimis, Jesu, refulge mentibus." In Lent at Lauds.] If He, who is light personified, is our Friend, we cannot stray in darkness.

Of course, our Savior has appointed human teachers and counselors whose direction we may and should follow. He has given the teaching body of His Church the greatest authority that it may infallibly point out for us the path to salvation. He has given us in His priests, and more especially in our confessors, guides of souls endowed with a special grace of office to lead the souls confided to their care to sanctity and beatitude. Hence, to maintain that it is possible to conduct the business of salvation immediately and exclusively with our Savior and to dispense with these human aids is erroneous and opposed to the doctrines of Christ. One who is not willing to make use of the ordinary means instituted by Christ will wait in vain for extraordinary assistance; one who wishes to guide himself by his own prudence is certain from the start that he who leads is no wiser than he who is led; one who condemns the external means appointed by Christ and wishes to be guided by inner experiences alone, throws the door wide open to the worst deceptions. No, anyone who wishes to be interiorly enlightened by Christ must first become an obedient child of the Church. When our Savior first revealed to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque the devotion to the Sacred Heart, He insisted repeatedly that she was to be scrupulously obedient to her ecclesiastical superiors and was to follow faithfully the advice of her confessor.

But if we are possessed of such a tmly Catholic habit of thought and action, we may boldly ask and expect that the wisdom of His divine heart will grant us light and strength in all the obscurities and difficulties of life.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, explains how the activity of Christ is correlated with that of His ministers. He writes: I have sown the seed of faith in your midst by my preaching, Apollo has watered it by his advice and admonitions; but the increase comes from the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 3:6). All external preaching of men would be useless if grace did not enlighten men interiorly. St. Augustine has well said: "The Master Who teaches is within; Christ teaches, His inspiration teaches. When His inspiration and His grace are wanting, external words are spoken in vain." [footnote: St. Augustine, In 7 Joan. *Tract.* 3, n. 18.] This is the doctrine, too, which Christ impressed on His apostles when he said: "W ithout Me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5). It is an article of faith that the grace of God is necessary for every salutary

thought, [footnote: Denzinger-Bannwait, *Enchiridion*, n. 180.] The teaching of the Church, the advice of directors of souls avail nothing without the grace of God.

In times of temptation, however, there is ordinarily no one to advise and help us but Jesus. Frequently doubts and difficulties arise which must be solved at once before we can ask anyone for advice. The application of general principles to particular cases, the wise weighing of all circumstances, is not always easy. Unless we be enlightened by grace, we shall certainly make mistakes. An ancient council of the Church teaches: "Whenever we consider well, and avoid faults and sins, we do so because of grace." [footnote: Cone. Arausic., II. can. 9; Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion*, n. 182.] We ought to pray daily: "Lead us not into temptation." that is, do not permit us to succumb to temptation. Our Lord tells us that We ought always to pray, and not lose heart (cf. Lk. 18:1).

We are all beset by difficulties. Human friends often fail to advise us correctly for the simple reason that they are unable to do so. Our divine Friend is always prepared to give advice, and does so willingly to all those who earnestly and in all confidence turn to His Sacred Heart. St. Margaret Mary Alacoque compares His divine Heart to an exhaustless fountain whence "flow love and light for those perfect friends whom He wishes to unite to Himself, in order to communicate to them His wisdom and principles that they may devote themselves heart and soul to glorify Him." Our Savior does not use audible language in speaking to us, but rays of internal illumination. By these He makes all things to appear as they really are: material goods in their nothingness, heavenly treasures in their splendor, sin in its ugliness, virtue in its excellence. He teaches us in such wise that we are not satisfied with merely knowing, but that, as St. Prosper well says: "We strive after those things that we formerly avoided, love those that once we hated, hunger after those tilings which before caused us nausea; in fine, transformed by a wonderful change, the things that were hidden are made manifest to us; the difficult is made easy; the bitter, sweet; darkness, light." [footnote: St. Prosper. *Contra Collât*, c. 7. n. 2.]

The instmction which our Savior imparts is without parallel; it dispenses with all external arguments and yet is more effective than human eloquence. The Prophet Isaias had prophesied of the future kingdom of God: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord" (Isa. 54:13); and Christ affirmed that this prophecy found its fulfillment in Himself (cf. Jn. 6:45). He is made unto us wisdom of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30). If we possess this wisdom, we are rich in life-giving knowledge, far beyond anything that the *world* can comprehend. For this is "the unsearchable riches of Christ" whose breadth transcends the limits of the universe, whose length extends through all ages, whose height reaches up even unto heaven, whose depth is the abyss of the divine mercy in our regard (cf. Eph. 3:8-18).

Let us then fervently and faithfully worship the heart of Jesus, and we shall abundantly draw from this fountain the waters of salvation unto eternal life.

CHAPTER VIII

A Powerful Friend

"Allpower in heaven and on earth

has been given to me" (Mt. 28:18).

1. *The omnipotence of the love of Jesus.* It is an article of faith that Christ as God is omnipotent, and that even as man He has all power in heaven and on earth. Consequently, in Jesus we have a Friend whose power is greater than that which any creature ever possessed or will possess. St. John the Evangelist, as we read in the Apocalypse, heard the angels and saints of heaven sing: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power. . . . And every creature, that is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them; I heard all saying: . . . to the Lamb . . . dominion for ever and ever" (Apoc. 5:12, 13). Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, who rules with resistless power the destinies of individuals and nations (cf. Apoc. 19:15, 16).

It is not our purpose here to consider the omnipotence of Jesus as a divine attribute calculated to fill us with wonder and terror. Nevertheless, we must not forget that our Savior, however much He may be our Friend, always remains that Majesty before whose judgment seat we must all one day appear, and whose judgment no man can resist.

Let us consider, rather, that omnipotence which is so intimately connected with the devotion to the Sacred Heart, the omnipotence of the love of Jesus. That love is a titanic force, we know not only from experience — as the sacrifices and heroic deeds prompted by a mother's love or Christian charity testify — but also from Holy Writ, where we read: "Love is strong as death" (Cant. 8:6). Charity "bears with all tilings." St. Paul tells us, and "never fails" (1 Cor. 13:7, 8). It was St. Paul's great love for the Corinthians which made him anxious to be sacrificed for their salvation, even though he should reap only ingratitude at their hands (cf. 2 Cor. 12:15).

When the fire of the love of God consumes a human heart as it did the hearts of the great saints, it neither knows limits nor weighs consequences, but becomes a divine madness. But it is madness only when considered in the cold light of reason alone, but not when considered before God, who is charity itself (cf. 1 Jn. 4:8) and who, for love of us, humbled Himself even to the folly of the cross.

St. Augustine, who is frequently represented holding a heart in his hand as a symbol of his great love for God and his neighbor, was wont to repeat that only those understand the language of love who are themselves consumed with love. And as a matter of fact, when we read what he and other saints have to say of love, we can easily understand how such language must appear to be senseless babble to one who has not experienced what it means to love God. The soul that seeks God, says St. Augustine, "loves, is on fire, glows, treads under foot all sensible pleasures, and proceeds on her way. She meets with difficulties, fears, horrors, threats — down with them! She conquers and goes on. Oh, this loving, this progressing, this losing of oneself, oh, this going to God! 'For he that will save his life, shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it.' This is the weapon with which the lover of the Unseen Beauty must arm himself." [footnote: St. Augustine, *Sermo* 159, n. 8]

St. John Chrysostom in his commentary' on the words, "Paul, a prisoner of Christ." remarks: "To be in chains for Christ is more glorious than to be an apostle, or a teacher, or an evangelist. He who truly loves Christ will understand my words. One who is beside himself for Christ, who is on fire with love for Christ, knows the value of fetters borne for His sake. He would rather be fettered for Christ than be in heaven. . . . And even if he were to receive no recompense for his pains, the mere suffering of hardships for the Object of his love would be a great reward and sufficient recompense. . . . All those that love

understand my words.” [footnote: John Chrysostom, *in Eph. hom.* 8, n. 1.] St. John Chrysostom was sincere when he wrote these words, for he suffered imprisonment for Christ and crowned the discomforts of captivity with heroic death.

What a Paul, a Chrysostom, an Augustine, had to say of the power of love, was not empty oratory; rather their words were but a feeble expression of their deeds. To know nothing and to esteem nothing but Christ, to live, work, suffer, and die for Christ; this is what they, and many thousands like them, have done through the power of love. The pyres of the martyrs are fiery meteors of the love of God. and the death of each saint is the consummation of a whole burnt offering on the altar of the love of God. Waters of tribulation have hurled themselves on this fire of love, but have been unable to extinguish it; streams of adversity have surged over it. but have succeeded only in raising it the more quickly heavenward. All things pass; love only remains, for it is stronger than death.

If the power of love in human hearts is so great, who can comprehend what it must be in the heart of our Savior? All our standards here fail us, for it is a power that is immeasurable. Because the heart of our Savior is the noblest of hearts, it can love as no other; but because it is the heart of the mediator between God and man, it must love as no other.

2. *The great capacity for love of our Savior is a consequence of His mission as Mediator between God and man.* The primordial relation of friendship between God and man, when God walked with men and loved them, was ruptured by the sin of our first parents. A great gulf opened between God and man; where love once reigned, enmity now held sway. And this gulf was constantly widened by the countless sins which the descendants of Adam added to that first sin. This fallen and as yet unredeemed race was compared by St. Augustine to a slimy stream which became ever slimier as it flowed through filthy channels away from God toward hell.

Yet the mercy of God prevailed over the rigor of His justice. God determined to make it again possible for men to love Him, and to do this in a most delicate manner, one which would not derogate from the dignity of man. He gave men a Mediator through whom they would be able to atone for their infidelity and become once more friends of God. He might have pardoned sin without mediation, but that would have been a pure gift of grace to which men would have contributed nothing to rehabilitate the primordial relation of friendship. Hence, God appointed a mediator between God and man so that men might atone for their sins through Him and so make amends for the past. This mediator is our Savior, the God-man Jesus Christ. “One mediator between God and man, Himself man, Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). As God He shared the nature of the Father; as man He shares our human nature; hence, He is a mediator between God and man at enmity with God.

It is essential that a mediator occupy a position midway between both adversaries and seek to reconcile them. Hence God, as God, cannot be mediator, since He is the one whom sinful man has antagonized, and no one can mediate with himself; for this another is necessary, as St. Paul expressly tells us (cf. Gal. 3:20). This other is the man Christ Jesus, Christ according to His human nature.

He is a man of the race of Adam, but untouched by the sin of Adam, entirely pure, holy, and in no need of redemption. Hence, He was able to perform a work altogether pleasing to God for His brothers in the flesh as a satisfaction for their sins; and because He is at the same time a divine person, this satisfaction was of infinite value in the sight of God and was sufficient to counterbalance and atone for the sins of the whole world.

What was this satisfactory act through which Christ obtained for us once more the grace and friendship of God? It was indeed His bitter passion and death together with all the other good works He

performed during His life on earth. But the soul of all these works was His love of God which spurred Him on to do and to suffer all these tilings, because they were pleasing to God. "But... that the world may know that I love the Father: and that I do as the Father has commanded Me" (Jn. 14:31).

Never did man love God as the Sacred Heart of Jesus loved him. And more, if we imagine the love of all the angels and saints and even of the Blessed Virgin Mary' united into one great love of God, this would be but a tiny spark when compared with the love which bums in the heart of Jesus. And the reason for this is that men have received each grace and virtue from the fullness of the Savior, as St. John testifies (cf. Jn. 1:16); and that the angels, as St. Paul teaches, are, when compared with Christ, but unworthy servants who must fall down before Him in adoration (cf. Heb. 1:6ff). Now, since love is the highest spiritual good (cf. Cor. 13), the love of God which fills the heart of Christ must surpass that of all the angels in the same degree in which He surpasses them, that is infinitely.

Now, can the heavenly Father refuse even a single request to that heart which loves Him more than all other creatures love Him? Impossible! Christ addresses His heavenly Father in these words: "I knew that Thou always hearest me (John 11:42). The prayer of Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the New Testament, is heard because of reverence (cf. Heb. 5:7), and because of His loving self-surrender to His heavenly Father. The love of Christ is all-powerful with God with whom it intercedes.

The love of the Savior is omnipotent also with respect to man for whom it intercedes. For us pilgrims on earth Christ is not yet a judge, but only a redeemer (cf. Jn. 12:47). Love is the power which dwells and operates in the heart of Jesus. When St. Paul says that God's love impels us (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14), he speaks only of a spark of that immense fire which bums in the heart of Jesus. The Sacred Heart of Jesus, from the first moment of Its being, was consumed by a single desire — the desire to bestow His gifts on all men. Love for us is the potent force which continually compels our Savior to shower His blessings upon us. Let us try to realize this fact: Our Savior is mediator between God and man. Because of His love for God He obtains from Him whatever He wishes; because of His love for men He desires for them all that is good and salutary. Is not our Savior, then, an omnipotent Friend in virtue of such love Recall how the Apostle boldly challenges the world and asks if it can prevail against such love. Who will condemn us? Christ Jesus died for us; for us He rose again from the dead; He is seated at the right hand of the Most High and intercedes for us. What can separate us from His love? (Cf. Rom. 8:34, 35.) He has loved me and delivered Himself for me (cf. Gal. 2:20). In all justice our Savior could address these words to St. Margaret Mary: "Behold this heart, which has loved men so much that it spared no pains, but exhausted and consumed itself to prove to men its love."

3. *What must we do in order to participate in the effects of this omnipotent love?* We must be prepared to accept it. Graces are not forced upon us. Again and again our Savior made it clear that our relation to Him depends on our own free will: "If thou wilt be My disciple," "if thou wilt follow Me," "if thou wilt enter the kingdom of heaven," "if thou wilt be perfect." The words He addressed to Jerusalem, He also addresses to all those who do not receive His graces: "I would, . . . but you would not" (cf. Mt. 23:37).

Indifference to the gifts of God incapacitates us for their reception. We must desire them earnestly, we must hunger and thirst for them. "He hath filled the hungry with good things" the Blessed Virgin sang in the Magnificat. "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink," said our Savior (Jn. 7:37). And again: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for justice: for they shall be satisfied" (Mt. 5:6). But over those who are sated with material goods and sensual gratifications, He pronounces the woe: "Woe to you who are filled: for you shall hunger" (Lk. 6:25). It is a just punishment for such base disdain of the heavenly banquet that none of those invited will be admitted to the banquet of eternal bliss. In like manner those who

carelessly say of the devotion to the Sacred Heart: "That is not for me, it does not suit me," rob themselves of a share of those wonderful graces which our Savior has prepared for us in it.

By means of this devotion, our Savior desires to exercise the omnipotence of His love for us, and to direct into our souls streams of grace from the infinite sea of the Godhead. But of what avail is this, if our heart is filled with earthly longings and desires? "You cannot serve two masters," says our Lord, "you cannot serve God and mammon, that is, earthly treasures. If your eye is fixed upon one master, then you neglect the other" (cf. Mt. 6:24). And St. James, the Apostle, writes: "The friendship of this world is enmity with God" (Jas. 4:4). We need not attempt to make the impossible possible, to be at one and the same time children of God and children of this world. If our divine Friend is to work miracles of His omnipotent love in us, we must firmly say with St. Paul: "The world is crucified to me" (Gal. 6:14); the world, God's adversary, is dead for me, rejected; I live only for Christ that He may live in me."

As to the objection: If this is a condition for the blessings of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, then it is a devotion for souls of the stature of a St. Paul, for souls that have already attained to a high degree of perfection. By no means! Our Savior expressly declared that by means of this devotion He wished to convert sinners, and to lead the imperfect to perfection. What He does demand, however, is an earnest, honest desire for improvement; and what He condemns is intentional perseverance in sin and imperfection. Certainly this devotion will not transform us instantaneously from sinful, weak men into saints worthy of canonization; nevertheless, if we persevere in the practice of this devotion, we shall make constant progress, and the omnipotent love of our Savior will bring us to the degree of perfection and happiness which He has destined for us. Perhaps He will hide from us until the end of our lives the great things that He works in our souls through this devotion. For it is better for most men to remain ignorant of the degree of sanctity they may really have attained so that they may humbly consider themselves still beginners and strive to advance. As long as a person makes an effort to please our Savior, he may confidently call on His love and He will answer: "Behold, here I am."

CHAPTER IX

A Friend Always Ready to Come to Our Assistance

*"Him who comes to me, I
will not cast out" (Jn. 6:37).*

1. *The constant presence of our Lord.* All human friendship is, of necessity, inadequate. Our friend is sometimes absent when we need him most. We are in want, embarrassment, danger, difficulty, or disquiet, and he does not suspect it. And even if he knows of our distress, distance or circumstances may keep him from our side and may prevent him despite the best of intentions, from lending his aid. Again a human friend is not always in the same good and gracious mood; if we approach him at the wrong time

with our concerns, he may grant us our wish with visible reluctance or put us off to another time. As a rule, human friendships can withstand only a limited strain; if the demands of friendship are too frequent or too great, a cooling, or even an extinction of love takes place. Friendship demands that we do not become a burden to our friend, but that, as far as we can, we make his life easier and more agreeable.

But none of these imperfections are found in friendship with our divine Savior. Distance, for instance, never separates Him from us. He promised His disciples: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Mt. 28:20). "Where two or three are gathered together for *My* sake, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt. 18:20). These promises, of course, apply in the first place to our Lord's presence in the universal Church and at public services. But even when we pray in the solitude of our rooms, our Savior is with us; else He had not given us the counsel to pray in the secrecy of our chambers (cf. Mt. 6:6). He gave as a reason that the Father sees in secret; but what the Father sees, the Son sees also not only as God, but also as man. Moreover, He promised His disciples: "When they bring you before tribunals for *My* name's sake, I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay' . . . and 'a hair of your head shall not perish' (cf. Lk. 21:15-18), because at the resurrection I will restore all things." Let us recall the incident of the first martyrdom. St. Stephen saw the heavens opened and the Son of man seated at the right hand of God (cf. Acts 7:55), witnessing his combat and prepared to take him at once to heaven and crown him with the victor's crown; for "He who overcomes, I will permit him to sit with Me upon My throne: as I also have overcome and have sat with My Father on His throne" (Apoc. 3:21). In the Apocalypse we read that St. John received a mission from Christ to write to the seven bishops of Asia Minor and to remind them of their good and evil deeds and to set before them the corresponding rewards and punishments.

But not only is our Savior always present in the whole Church and in each individual Christian with His knowledge and external aid, but He is present also in a more special and intimate manner.

He said to His Apostles: "If you remain in Me through charity, I will remain in you and will conserve and augment the spiritual life in your souls as the vine conserves and augments the life of the branches." "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:4, 5). St. Paul compares Christ and the faithful to the head and members of a human body, and expresses the desire: "May we always grow in the exercise of charity as members of a mystical body in union with Christ. Who is the head of this body; may we grow by means of our every deed and suffering. For the whole growth of the body proceeds from Christ. All together form a compact, living organism, in which each organ has its peculiar place and function, not only for its own advantage but for the advantage of the whole body" (cf. Eph. 4:15, 16). The love which dwells in the hearts dedicated to Christ is the life-giving sap, the vital energy which unifies all members and continually imparts to them vital activity. The Council of Trent explains this doctrine of the faith as follows: "Since Jesus Christ continually communicates to the just that strength which precedes all their good works, accompanies them, and follows them even as the head communicates energy to the members and the vine to the branches." nothing is wanting to the just to bring forth fruits of eternal life, [footnote: Sess. 6, c. 16]

Christ, therefore, is not only externally in our midst, but He is united to us interiorly in a most intimate way; He is never distant from us unless we separate ourselves from Him through our own fault. He prayed to His heavenly Father for all those who believe in Him: I pray for them, "that all may be one, even as Thou, Father, in Me. and I in Thee; that they also may be one, in Us; . . . and the glory that Thou hast

given Me. I have given to them, that they may be one. even as We are One" (Jn. 17:20 if.). This glory is the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father (cf. Jn. 1:14). He has given us this glory, yes, even Himself that we may always be united to Him and through Him to the Father.

2. *Jesus is always prepared to help us.* The mere presence of a friend of itself is insufficient. Our friend must in addition be ready to listen to our requests and to grant them insofar as they are reasonable and can be granted. In this respect also our divine Savior is a friend such as never yet graced human society. What, after all, is the real reason for His uninterrupted presence in our midst if not precisely to hear and grant our just requests? He is the only King who grants audiences unceasingly by day and by night. Indeed, we may go further and say what we should not have dared to say had He Himself not suggested it. Great nobles frequently have a servant constantly at their side whose duty it is to obey every whim of their master. Are not we, because of the goodness of our Savior, such lords? Is not He, so to speak, our servant, always ready to listen to every request that we come to make? Does He ever send us away without assistance? He has said: "I am come to serve (cf. Mt. 20:28), I am in your midst as One who serves" (cf. Lk. 22:27). These words, of course, apply primarily to the time when He dwelt on earth in the form of a servant (cf. Phil. 2:7). But He speaks of Himself in His glorified state in similar tenus. As the future judge, He compares Himself with a master who returns late at night and finds his servants faithfully discharging their duties; and He concludes with the words: "Amen I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them recline at table and will come and serve them" (Lk. 12:37). Men do not act like this; our Savior in this instance applies the parable and designates Himself as the servant of His servants. We know, and Christ Himself indicates as much in this simile, that He is and remains the Lord, and that we are and remain His servants. But this is precisely the greatness, the consoling condescension of the love of our Savior; by His omnipotence He fills up the infinite gulf between His greatness and our nothingness; and even more, His love compels Him to invert the relationship and makes Him the servant of His friends.

We must recall here still another statement of our Lord, one which only He could dare make. He tells us that we should act like a widow who could not obtain justice against her adversary from an unjust judge. She finally became so importunate with this judge that he said to himself: "Because this widow bothers me. I will do her justice, lest by continually coming she weary me" (cf. Lk. 18:5). What application did our Lord draw from this parable? That we are to present our petitions importunately day and night; and that we shall more surely obtain help from God than this widow did from the unjust judge.

It would certainly be inconsiderate to rouse our earthly friends from their slumbers in order to tell them of our needs. But with our Lord we need not exercise such consideration. Day and night He is ready to listen to us; for Him there is no inconvenient hour. He tells us in another parable of a man who came at night to the house of his friend and roused him to obtain bread, for he had received an unexpected visitor. His friend answered: "Don't bother me, I have already retired; you cannot expect me to get up again to give you bread." But the other kept right on knocking and begging. "I tell you," our Savior continued, "if the master of the house would not get up for the sake of his friend, he would do so, nevertheless, and give him all he wanted because of his importunity." Consequently, we are here practically commanded to be importunate. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you" (Lk. 11:9). Have we ever heard such words from the lips of any other friend? Our Savior, therefore, cannot take it amiss if we believe His words and act on them. It is true that He is speaking in these parables of His heavenly Father, who will certainly hear us; yet the will of the Father is also the will of the Son, and the human will of Christ is perfectly conformed to His divine will. The heart of our Savior is generous toward all who call upon it, however many they may be, however great the number of their requests, however

importunate their desires, provided only that they are desires worthy of a friend of Jesus Christ. Indeed our Savior is the more pleased, the more often we come to Him, the more we ask of Him, the more importunate our desires to become possessed of His treasures.

Nor do inconsiderate conduct, faults, or sins diminish His readiness to help if we but return to Him with a contrite heart. No human friend would tolerate the treatment which we accord our Savior. The ingratitude of men is keenly felt by His divine Heart as He revealed so explicitly to St. Margaret Mary. But as soon as we say sincerely "I am sorry," He is at once ready to bestow His friendship on us once more; hence, we must not despair after an unfortunate fall; not even after repeated falls. But we must cast ourselves at His feet with the sentiments of a Mary Magdalen, and we, too, shall hear the words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

3. *Our Savior at times apparently denies us His assistance.* This happens especially when we ask for something that we think would be for our good, when actually it would prove harmful. How often the attainment of some temporal advantage for which we pray so earnestly, would prove to be to the detriment of our soul! We do not know this, but our Savior does; consequently, He does not grant our request but gives us something else instead which will prove beneficial. Similarly we would often be delivered from pain, although it would be far better for us to obtain the strength to bear the pain with resignation. Thus St. Paul asked our Lord earnestly and repeatedly to be delivered from a heavy cross. But He answered: "My grace is sufficient for thee," for strength is made perfect in weakness; in the weakness of man the conquering power of divine grace is made manifest. It is for this reason that the Apostle gloried in his infirmity. "For," he said, "when I am weak, then I am strong" through the help of my Lord who stands at my side (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7 ff.).

Our Savior has promised great progress on the road of perfection to all those who diligently honor His Sacred Heart. Some, of course, may say that despite the practice of this devotion they are still very imperfect. We must remember, however, that it is not at all necessary that we perceive the workings of grace in our souls. If we did, it might engender spiritual pride. Since it is better for the soul not to regard that which it has attained, but to look rather to what is still before (cf. Phil. 3:13), God frequently hides from it His graces and shows it instead its faults. On one occasion St. Gertrude prayed for various persons. During her prayer she saw in a vision the Sacred Heart in which a stream had its source which fructified all about it. She understood that this stream represented the graces which she had obtained through her intercession, and she asked our Lord: "What will these graces profit those for whom I have prayed? They do not perceive the effects of my prayers, do not know that they have received anything and consequently experience no consolation." Our Lord answered her: "I know when to reveal to them the effects of your prayers and I will do so at the proper time." [footnote: Gertrude, *Gesandter der göttlichen Liebe*, Freiburg, 1915, bk. 3, Chap. 76, p. 262] On another occasion our Lord told her that He did not take all imperfections from His servants, for in combating these they gave Him special honor and proved their fidelity.

Our Lord seems to desert a soul especially at the time of interior desolation when the light of faith, which once shone so brightly, grows dim; when the courage, which once animated the soul, gives place to despondency; when disgust takes the place of the joy she once experienced in prayer, in divine service, and in the reception of the sacraments; and when, in addition, violent and stubborn temptations flood the soul and bring it to the very brink of despair. It seems to such a soul that a loving Savior does not exist or if He does, that He has entirely abandoned the soul. It is in vain that such a soul struggles to escape from this pitiable condition; it makes as little progress as the apostles did when they struggled on the Sea of Genesareth against wind and wave while their Master prayed for them on the mountain top (cf. Mt. 14:23,

24). Every' soul that takes its religious life seriously must endure such an agony comparable to that which our Lord endured in the Garden of Olives; but, most of all, great saints, those whom our Lord wishes to admit to special intimacy. Such experience is for them a difficult but at the same time salutary purgatory, which purifies them from all inordinate self-love and selfcomplacency, and prepares them for the reception of extraordinary' graces. St. Catherine of Siena is commonly considered to be the greatest saint that graced the end of the so-called dark ages. She had already attained a high degree of sanctity before such a cross was laid on her shoulders. In addition to great aridity of soul, temptations to sins of the most debasing nature tormented her soul, temptations made the more vivid by visible pictures and external attractions. She had no peace day or night and ardently longed for death. At length she conquered these temptations. It was then that our Savior appeared to her and consoled her. "O my Lord," she said to Him, "where were You when my heart was tormented by this filth?" "I was in the midst of thy heart, ' our Lord answered. "What?" exclaimed St. Catherine, "Thou, purity itself, wast in a heart so full of uncleanness?" "But did these impure pictures cause you pleasure or sadness?" "The greatest sadness and displeasure." "And who caused this if not I, hidden in thy heart?"

No matter how great the darkness which encompasses our souls, our Savior will always remain with us if we wish to remain with Him. But if Christ is with us, who shall prevail against us? (Cf. Rom. 8:31.)

CHAPTER X

An Indispensable Friend

*"For there is no other name under heaven given
to men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).*

1. *Friendship with Jesus is necessary for salvation.* In human society', friendship, in the full meaning of the term, is indeed a great blessing, one which adds considerably to the enjoyment of life; but it is not absolutely indispensable. It is a freely chosen relationship as distinguished from others which have their origin in nature, as for example, the relation of a child to his parents or of a citizen to the state.

Friendship with Jesus is, of course, also free in the sense that no one is physically forced to take Jesus for a friend. Indeed, to speak of forced friendship would involve a contradiction, since love is essentially an internal attachment to a person which has its origin in the depths of the soul. Nevertheless, we are commanded to love God; "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment" (Mt. 22:37, 38). No mere man can command another to love him; but God can, for He has created the human heart and has given it not only the capacity', but also the inclination to love Him. Our rational nature, as long as it has not been vitiated by sin, naturally tends to God as to its highest good and last end. When God, therefore,

commands us to love Him, He is merely formulating the unwritten law indelibly imprinted in every human soul.

Nevertheless, God does not use physical force to insure obedience to this law; instead He gives all men liberty either to love Him and attain their last end, or to reject Him and lose forever the possession of their greatest good. The loss of the love of God is in itself the greatest punishment for deliberate separation from God as St. Augustine tells us: 'What am I to Thee, O God, that Thou commandest me to love Thee and that Thou art angry with me when I do not love Thee and threatenest me with unspeakable misery? Would it then be but a small misfortune if I did not love Thee?' [footnote: St. Augustine, *Confessions*. 1, 1. chap. 5.]

This also is our relation toward our Savior. We can be His friends if we wish; we *ought* to be His friends, because right order and His holy will demand this of us; but we are at liberty to reject His friendship and to pay for our folly in eternal misery'. Jesus, therefore, is an indispensable friend inasmuch as we cannot attain salvation without Him. As St. Paul so tersely says: "If any man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. 16:22). The relation between the love of God and the love of Jesus Christ is explained by St. John in this way: Jesus Christ is born of God, "and every one that loveth Him who begot, loveth Him also who is born of Him" (cf. 1 Jn. 5:1). Jesus Christ is born of God, not because of His humanity, but also according to His humanity. The Son of God did not lose His eternal sonship when He became man. Just as Christ is but one person, so He is one Son of God. There are not two sons, one eternal and one adopted in time. The assertion that in Quist we have two sons is heretical and has been condemned by the Church. Consequently, we owe our Savior, Jesus Christ, the same reverence and the same love that we owe our heavenly Father. Therefore, without love of Jesus, without His friendship, we cannot attain salvation.

Jesus demands such love of us. "He who loves father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me" (Mt. 10:37). "Amen. I say to you, he who is not prepared to leave father and mother and all that he has when My service calls for such sacrifice, cannot be My disciple" (cf. Lk. 14:26). But of those who love Him. He says: "the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me" (Jn. 16:27). "Abide in My love" (Jn. 15:9). "He who has My commandments and keeps them; he it is who loves Me. But he who loves Me, will be loved by My Father: and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (Jn. 14:21). Mutual love and spiritual communion of life are identical with friendship; hence, friendship with Jesus is necessary for salvation. The kingdom of heaven is made up wholly of the friends of Jesus. They constitute the Church triumphant, and this Church is the bride of the Lamb clothed in fine linen. "For the fine linen are the justifications of the saints. . . . Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Apoc. 19:7 ff.). But he who is not clothed with this wedding garment will fall a victim to the same sad fate that befell the man in the parable to whom the king said: "Friend, how didst thou come here without a wedding garment?" And he commanded the waiters: "Bind his hands and feet, and cast him forth into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping, and gnashing of teeth" (Mt. 22:12 ff.). Such is the lot of those who do not love Jesus; for the wedding garment is nothing else than love and the works wrought by love. If I possess all gifts and perform all good works, but have not charity, it profits me nought; I am nothing (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1 ff.).

2. *Why is the friendship of Jesus necessary for us?* Since friendship with Jesus is distinguished from all other friendships by this that it is necessary for us, we may here ask a question that is not ordinarily asked in the case of human friendships: Why is this friendship necessary for us? This question and its answer, as we shall see, are in no wise derogatory to the concept of the noblest and purest friend-

ship. The answer may be given in a single sentence: Man needs the friendship of Jesus to become again truly a man such as he ought to be according to the designs of God. Since the fall of our first parents there has been but one Man who fully realized in Himself the divine prototype of man. This one is Jesus Christ; all others approximate this prototype or ideal more or less closely as they are more or less intimately united with Jesus.

After Adam had sinned, God said to him: "Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3:19). The divine had been lost, only the earthly remained. Because of their descent from Adam, men had lost their moral excellence; they retained only that which was lowly, earthly, beastly. Then God gave us in Jesus Christ a new Adam, a spiritual progenitor, through whom man was to regain his original dignity.

St. Paul explains the difference between these two progenitors in these words: "The first man was of the earth, earthly," of him the earthly minded are born; "the second Man, from heaven, heavenly," and of Him the heavenly minded are born (cf. 1 Cor. 15:47, 48). If we do not become heavenly minded men through union with Christ, we shall remain under the curse pronounced over the earthly minded because of our origin from the first Adam. Hence, we need the friendship of Christ that, delivered from the curse of sin, we may become again such men as we ought to be according to the intention and original plan of God. Hence, too, the Apostle warns us: "Strip yourselves of the old man, and put on the new, formed to the image of the Creator, where Christ is all and in all" (cf. Col. 3:9 ff). Put off the old man, who is a child of death; put on the new man, for whom Christ is divine strength unto eternal life.

Unfortunately there are millions of men on earth who outwardly seem to exemplify the concept and ideal of man, but who interiorly are but sorry wrecks of that humanity which God had planned from all eternity and created in time. "God created man to His own Image" (Gen. 1:27). The body is not an image of God, for God is incorporeal; but the soul is. God stamped on it His image with sanctifying grace, by which man, participating in the divine nature, becomes a free, blessed child of God and heir of heaven. Since the fall of Adam this image has been destroyed in countless souls, and on its ruins a new picture has been raised, the image of the fallen angel, whose slave man becomes through sin. Man is the child of him whose image he carries in his soul; those who bear the image of God, are children of God; those who bear the image of Satan, are children of the devil (cf. 1 Jn. 3:9, 10). A child of the devil is certainly the opposite of the ideal of noble humanity. We are true men only when, renewed after the ideal of Christ, we become children of God.

Christ is the substantial "image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature" (Col. 1:15). Man was created after the pattern of this eternal exemplar and consequently was in his original beauty an image of God. How was the image of God, which had been destroyed in the souls of men by sin, to be restored if not by renewing again the original pattern which was the plan also of the first creation. All things were created after the eternal image of God, and all things were to be renewed according to this likeness. "All things were created through Him and unto Him" (Col. 1:16); hence, all things must be renewed by Him and in Him. Such is the plan God conceived from all eternity "to reestablish all things in Christ" in the fullness of time (Eph. 1:10). At the moment when we are re-created according to the image of Christ and united to Him, those creative words resound again in our souls: "Let there be light"; but now it is the eternal light itself which glows in our souls. For the Son of God became man that He "the brightness of His (God's) glory, and the figure of His substance" (Heb. 1:3), might renew in our souls, freed from sin and renewed in grace, the image of the glory of God. Thus all of us, as the Apostle tells us, "with faces unveiled, we are being transformed into His very image, from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). In other words: We shall reflect in the godliness our Christian conduct the glory of the Lord which dwells within us and

shall interiorly become more perfectly transformed by "the spirit of the Lord" into more perfect images of Christ, and shall grow in glory until at last we shall attain perfect glory through union with Christ our Savior in heaven.

For those who are walking on the path to destruction, this glory is veiled; for them "the god of this world [the devil] has blinded their unbelieving minds that they should not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4). We, however, no longer wish to bear the image of the earthly man in us, but rather that of the heavenly (cf. 1 Cor. 15:49), in order that we may be renewed day by day (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16) and that we may not only be called children of God, but may be such in truth and become daily better and more-loved children of our heavenly Father as brothers of His beloved Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

As our Savior alone is essentially the image of the Father, so, too, He only is by nature the Son of God. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mt. 17:5). "Thou art My Son, today have I begotten Thee" (Heb. 1:5). Through grace men become the adopted children of God (cf. Gal. 4:5). Of course, this adoption is not merely an external formality such as we have when a man adopts a child; but we are transformed by it interiorly through sanctifying grace into children of God, though only into adopted children.

With the loss of sanctifying grace men had lost their adoption and become slaves of Satan. Who could restore their kinship with God more appropriately than He who is by nature the Son of God? Through love of us He became one of our race, satisfied for the whole of our debt, restored sanctifying grace to us, and raised us to the dignity of His brothers, "that He should be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). He is not ashamed to call us brethren, says the Apostle (cf. Heb. 2:11). He became man "that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:5). Without friendship with Christ, without becoming His brothers, we remain children of wrath (cf. Eph. 2:3), rejected, disinherited children, whose portion is hell; hence, friendship with Christ is necessary for us.

3. *What are the fruits of friendship with Christ?* The answer to this question is obvious from what has already been said. Friendship with Jesus raises us from our fallen state and makes us once more pleasing to God. Through Christ, God has made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in the light of truth and justice, He has delivered us from the powers of darkness and translated us to the kingdom of the Son of His love (cf. Col. 1:12, 13).

Friendship with the archetypal and ideal Man, Jesus Christ makes us once more true men. "men of God" (2 Tim. 3:17).

Through friendship with Jesus the image of God destroyed in us by sin is restored. Of every friend of Christ are the words of the Apostle verified: God foreknew those who will be His own; these He predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son, first here in time, then perfectly in eternity (cf. Rom. 8:29, 30).

Through friendship with Christ we attain once more our lost dignity of children of God. "You have been called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). All friends of Christ possess the spirit of Christ, and this spirit bears them witness that they are children of God and as children of God brothers and joint heirs with Christ (cf. Rom. 8:9, 16, 17). As brothers of Christ they are obliged to accept the mind of Christ (cf. Phil. 2:5). For since we have access through Christ to the grace of being children of God and glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God (cf. Rom. 5:2, 3), we may have no other mind than that which Christ has.

This is why the devotion to the Sacred Heart is so significant. While other devotions bring before us chiefly the exterior of Christ — as for example the devotion to the five wounds or to the holy cross — devotion to the Sacred Heart is concerned entirely with the interior. It is directed toward the love of Christ and toward the life of His soul animated by this love. Consequently, it might be designated as the devotion to the sentiments of Christ. And can anyone who is a friend of Jesus, who is familiar with the sentiments of His heart, ever cherish thoughts and ideals other than heavenly? Can the spirit of the world, selfishness, pride, quarrelsomeness, and all the other vices, be cherished by one who honors the heart of Jesus? If we ask ourselves in all our thoughts, aims, and endeavors: “Is this worthy of the heart of Christ?” our conscience, animated by faith, will not leave us in doubt.

Let us, then, conform our heart to the heart of Christ, and our conversation will be in heaven (cf. Phil. 3:20). The heavenly atmosphere that fills the heart of Christ will also purify our sentiments and strengthen them and influence our deeds and omissions. We will live the life of a child of God and spread everywhere the pleasant air of good conduct. God will make us to triumph in Christ Jesus and to carry with us in every place the very atmosphere of our knowledge of Him (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14).

CHAPTER XI

A Profound Friend

“God grant that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts, that you may be able to comprehend what is the depth of Christ” (cf. Eph. 3:16ff).

1. *The frankness of Jesus Christ.* Jesus is a unique friend because of His unparalleled frankness and unfathomable depth. Frankness and depth are essential characteristics of every noble friendship. No man takes an uncommunicative, unapproachable, reserved individual for a friend. Friendship is essentially a spiritual union. Yet frankness must not be shallow. There are men whose interior is entirely laid bare after a short acquaintance. They do not make it a point to keep any secrets for themselves. Since they have no spiritual treasures to guard, their heart is on their tongue and they manifest all their thoughts, desires, ambitions. No one values such shallow individuals. Since a friend communicates his interior to his friend, prudent men will be loath to extend their friendship to one whose chief occupation is to publish from the housetops what has been confided to him. Moreover, men seek in their friend the complement for their own insufficiencies — at least ordinarily. But what can anyone find in a superficial, diffusive individual? Poor in spiritual goods, he squanders even the little he possesses. On the other hand, it is one of the keenest joys of friendship to find in our friend ever new treasures of spiritual wealth: beautiful thoughts, accurate judgments, noble tendencies, delicate consideration, lofty ambitions, firmness of character, and ever new proofs of changeless fidelity. The more vivid the conviction that every deeper insight into the soul life of our friend will disclose new riches to our wondering eyes, the more glorious is our friendship.

Possibly such a friend as we have just described is the unrealized ideal of a human friend, but it is literally true as a description of our Friend, Jesus. He stands before us in luminous clarity. We know accurately what a treasure we have in Him. He has revealed this to us and proposes it for our belief as an article of faith through the Catholic Church.

Our Savior is as truly man as we are ourselves, and nothing human has remained foreign to Him, sin alone excepted. He knows from His own personal experience all the miseries to which we are heir, the interior and exterior sufferings to which we are subject, and even death itself. He possesses a sympathetic, sensitively human heart, and was not ashamed to shed tears of compassion at the sufferings of His fellow men. His mission was to console the suffering, to aid them in their troubles, nay, eventually to free His friends from all suffering and to make them share unspeakable, eternal bliss in His company. He is "The man Christ Jesus," as the Apostle calls Him (1 Tim. 2:5), or "The Son of Man," as our Savior was wont to designate Himself, a man of our race and the best of our race.

But He is at the same time the eternal Son of God, who says of Himself: "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father" (Mt. 11:27), and "that which My Father hath given Me, is greater than all," it is the divine nature; "I and the Father are One" (Jn. 10:29, 30). And St. Paul says that He "is over all things, God blessed for ever" (Rom. 9:5). He appeared in our midst as man in order to establish the kingdom of God, but not the earthly kingdom expected by the Jews. It is not a kingdom of which one may say: "Here it is or there (cf. Lk. 17:21), this mountain chain or this river bound it;" but it is a kingdom of holiness and justice, and its end is heaven. The way to this end is narrow and rough; it is the way of the observance of the commandments, of self-denial, of unwearied carrying of the cross, of readiness to sacrifice even life itself to attain the end (cf. Lk. 14:26, 27, 33).

Also in this regard our Savior deals with us with perfect candor. He has concealed none of the difficulties necessarily connected with His service. And if we are faithless in His service despite our desire to be one of His disciples. He warns us through the voice of our conscience and does not desist until we listen to His warning or separate ourselves entirely from Him (cf. Jn. 6:68). He is the light of the world; His person is the light, His doctrine is the light, His moral precepts are the light. As regards all the things that we must believe and do to attain salvation. He has given us the clearest instruction. There is no trace of reserve or fraud in Him. Hence. He can call all of us one day before His judgment seat, because we have not even the semblance of an excuse that He did not deal openly and honestly with us. "All that are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they who have done good shall come forth unto resurrection of life; but they who have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (Jn. 5:28, 29). Such is the frank attitude of our Savior in our regard.

2. *Our Savior, however, is also a friend of unfathomable depth.* It must be so; for since He is to be our Friend for all eternity, we should some day exhaust His wealth if it were not inexhaustible; we should then be unable to find new treasures in Him, and indifference would succeed to affection and enthusiasm. Eternal friendship — eternal in the strict sense of the word — demands an infinite depth of spiritual treasure in our friend. Since in heaven God's riches become to a certain extent the property of each of the blessed, all the inhabitants of heaven possess within themselves a treasure which only God can perfectly comprehend and value. However deeply one of the blessed may delve into the soul of the other, he can never plumb the bottom, because he invariably reaches the reflection of the Divinity' which he cannot fathom. But the unfathomable abyss of perfection of our divine Savior is incomparably greater than that of all the saints, because all possible modes of union with the Divinity possessed by the saints are found in a far higher degree in Him, and because He is a divine person, which cannot be said of any saint.

We shall realize only in heaven the entire depth of this unfathomable abyss of perfection when we shall see our Savior as He is (cf. 1 Jn. 3:2). We shall see Him in His human and divine nature. We shall come to know all the privileges of grace accorded His humanity; His surpassing knowledge and wisdom, His boundless love of God and man, His absolute justice in all His commands and judgments. His stainless sanctity, His omnipotence, and despite His greatness, His condescension toward men, whom He recognizes as brothers and as members of His mystical body. When we shall be enraptured by this undreamed of beauty and shall see and admire in His created perfection the embodiment of the exemplar of man, we are still only at the threshold of the fathomless depth of perfection. For the created perfections of Christ do not constitute the real object of the beatific vision. That object is the Divinity Itself, which has assumed the human nature of Christ. We would not see our Lord as He is if we did not see also His Divinity; we shall see it unveiled as it is; we shall see and marvel; we shall marvel and love; we shall love, and all the yearnings of our soul will be satisfied; we shall have our fill and still always hunger anew, because we cannot exhaust the infinite. We shall be submerged in a bottomless sea, not to perish in it, but to find there the eternal strength and joy of life. It is the primeval sea of spiritual light for whose perception the soul will be endowed with a special power which, in the language of the Church, is called the "light of glory." By sinking into this infinite sea of light, the blissful rapture of the first moment of beatitude is renewed each moment and maintained at its original vigor. And for all the aeons of eternity this rapture will never lose its power to charm, never dull the edge of our desires. Thus, the two seemingly contradictory promises of Holy Writ will be verified: "They that eat Me, shall yet hunger: and they that drink Me, shall yet thirst" (Ecclus. 24:29), and: "He who comes to Me shall not hunger: and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (Jn. 6:35). Our Savior Himself explains the paradox: "He that shall drink of the water that I will give him, shall not thirst for ever."

And why shall he not thirst? Because "the water that will give him, shall become in him a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting" (Jn. 4:13, 14). O this blessed thirst, which is always satisfied! O this blessed drinking, which continually stimulates the thirst to drink yet more of the fountain of light and life! How perfectly all the desires of our heart for happiness will be satisfied by this eternally refreshing draught.

But as long as we are detained here below "it has not yet appeared what we shall be" (1 Jn. 3:2). Only death will perfectly unite us with the object of our longings. Therefore let us say with the Apostle: "For to me, to live is Christ: and to die is gain; ... desiring to depart and to be with Christ, a lot by far the better" (Phil. 1:21, 23).

Yet our Savior would not be the loving Friend He is if, during our pilgrimage here below, He denied us all consolation at the source of our beatitude. Even in this life those words are verified: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink" (Jn. 7:37). Thousands have drunk at this fountain and acknowledged with St. Paul: "By Christ doth our comfort abound" (2 Cor. 1:5). So full of this comfort was the Apostle that he deemed it a great grace to be permitted to preach everywhere "the unfathomable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8).

But, of course, we must thirst after Christ if our yearnings for happiness are to be satisfied by Him. We must bring Him a heart empty of inordinate love of earth so that the treasures of His heavenly love may find room in it. We must not appear before Him with narrow hearts, but must enlarge them with love, desire, confidence, so that our Savior may fill them. Then we shall experience more and more how exhaustless and beatific the riches of His heart are. A single ray of grace from this heart can fully compensate us for all the efforts, sufferings, sacrifices which service of the Savior entails. However, words

are inadequate, only experience can teach us. The faithful servants of Christ experience delights for which human language has no words, "secret words," St. Paul calls them (2 Cor. 2:4). But one thing the Apostle does tell us: "For the excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord ... I have suffered the loss of all things, and I count them as dung, that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

Many great saints have cherished the same sentiments and enjoyed the same experiences. Precisely because of these experiences, they could no longer understand how anyone could love anything but Christ. Far from growing weary of the charm of the knowledge of Christ, they adored heaven and earth not to disturb them in the enjoyment of this delight. Do not the writings in which the saints attempted to describe this experience, the writings of a Catherine of Siena, a Teresa, a Blessed Henry Suso, and many others breathe forth a luminous atmosphere of supernatural happiness which reminds us of the eternal light of heaven which shall one day, we hope, be also our portion? One who has not lost all taste for pure, spiritual, true happiness must conceive the desire to be permitted to taste a little of this happiness here below.

3. *It is possible for all, each after his own fashion, to experience the joy of sounding the fathomless treasures of our Savior.* The ecstasies of the great saints are extraordinary graces which are not accorded to all Christians, not even to all the saints. The omnipotence of God can, of course, from stones raise up children to Abraham (cf. Mt. 3:9), can transform the persecutor of the Church, Saul, into a St. Paul (cf. Acts 9:1-30). It can, therefore, bestow on every Christian the grace of the highest contemplation. But in His ordinary providence God proportions His graces to the endowments, the occupations, the inclinations of the individual. By far the greater number of men are called not to the contemplative but to the active life, either to mental or physical labor. Therefore, it would not be expedient for God to bestow on a soul called to the active life supernatural gifts which would interfere with its external activity. There may be circumstances in which the saints of God lead a double life, and, despite continued contemplation, discharge their external duties unimpeded; but such cases are miraculous and therefore extraordinary. Ordinarily, God does not conduct the souls He has chosen for the active life on the paths of lofty contemplation; for contemplation is not a necessary means or measure of holiness.

On the other hand, friendship with our Savior, knowledge of Him, confidential dealings with Him, explorations of the sanctuary of His heart, pleasure at and participation in His exhaustless treasures, everything, in short, the devotion to the Sacred Heart offers us, is a path open to all and on which all of good will can walk. Offer all your works, then, to our Savior as a return for His love and in reparation for the ingratitude and insults with which so many men reward His love; be on your guard against increasing the accumulation of human ingratitude by deliberate sin. Glance at times at the picture of the Sacred Heart with the eyes of the body if possible, or, at least with those of the soul. Permit the flames of love which arise from this heart to enkindle a return of love in your own. If a cross presses down on your shoulders, look up to the cross which surmounts this heart and draw courage from it to carry yours courageously in the Savior's footsteps. If your heart is wounded by neglect and calumny, gaze at the crown of thorns that surrounds this divine heart, a crown of shame which our Savior bore for our sakes. Do not forget the gaping wound inflicted on the heart of the Lord; enter there in spirit in the hour of temptation and say: "O Jesus, within Thy wounds hide me. From the wicked foe defend me."

Here we have a familiarity with Jesus which all may practice, and through which all may participate in the treasures of His heart. Be convinced that, if you earnestly and perseveringly deal thus with the Savior, you will be walking on a safe way. The words of our Savior be verified: "And many that are last shall be first" (cf. Mt. 19:30). Many, who passed through this life unnoticed will be among the first in

heaven, because of the treasures of holiness which they merited in simplicity, fidelity, and perseverance. This also is one of the unfathomable mysteries of the heart of our divine Lord, that so many apparently insignificant souls are numbered among His best friends.

CHAPTER XII

At the Heart of Our Friend

"As ... I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me" (Jn. 6:58).

1. *It is characteristic of friendship that friends desire the company of each other.* A separation which precludes all communication would, in the long run, seriously imperil friendship. Out of sight, out of mind. A companionship which consisted solely in the memories of days gone by, would hardly suffice to keep alive the flame of friendship.

Jesus knows thoroughly the characteristics and needs of our nature. For this reason He would have remained gladly in our midst to console His friends with His presence and to attract those who still keep aloof. He tells His apostles: "I know that sorrow hath filled your hearts because of My departure" (cf. Jn. 16:6). But to the incredulous Jews He prophesied: "When I am gone, you shall seek Me and shall not find Me, but die in your sins" (cf. Jn. 8:21). He knew that for the Church His absence would be a time of painful yearning after her bridegroom. While the bridegroom was present, all rejoiced. "But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day" (Mk. 2:20).

Why, then, did our Savior not remain visibly present in His Church? In addition to other reasons, it was His love for us which persuaded Him to ascend to heaven. A friend may undertake a journey to gain some advantage for his friend and so prove his love by a temporary absence. Such was the mind of our Savior at His ascension as is evidenced by the words which He addressed to His apostles: "But I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I depart" (Jn. 16:7). But why expedient? In the first place, faith becomes more meritorious if we believe in Christ without seeing Him. "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed" (Jn. 20:29). In the second place, our Savior wished by His ascension to reopen for us heaven which had been closed by God's just decree until the Redeemer should have taken possession of His throne (cf. Heb. 9:8-12). Jesus entered heaven as our forerunner (cf. Heb. 6:20) to prepare a place for us and at death to take us to Himself that we might be where He is (cf. Jn. 14:3). As the first fruits of the work of redemption He conducted to heaven all the saints of the Old Testament, from Adam down to John the Baptist, St. Joseph, and the deceased just who had seen the Savior; hence, we read: "Ascending on high He led away captives; He gave gifts to men" (Ep. 4:8). In the third place, our Savior wished by His ascension to direct our gaze toward heaven. "Mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2).

After all, of what value would it have been to most men had our Savior remained in Palestine or in some other one place? Not all could make a pilgrimage to meet Him and even if they could, because of the millions who would wish to see Him, the individual would obtain but a passing glimpse. Our Savior's love here proved itself inventive. As it urged Him to ascend into heaven for our advantage, it also compelled Him to find a means yet to remain in our midst, a means which would make intimate and constant companionship with Him possible for every believing soul and yet would not counteract the advantages connected with His ascension.

We acknowledge and believe that, in the words of the Council of Trent, "in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, consequently the whole Christ, is truly, really, substantially contained." This is, we admit an incomprehensible mystery. But, dear Jesus, we can understand that Thy love can conceive and execute things we cannot understand. Thou hast said: "This is My body, this is My blood," and full of faith, we fall down and say with that great client of the Most Blessed Sacrament, St. Thomas Aquinas,

"Hidden God, devoutly I adore Thee.

Truly present underneath these veils:

I believe, for God the Son hath said it —

Word of Truth that ever shall endure."

O Jesus, increase in us the devotion to this greatest and sweetest mystery of Thy love!

2. *The presence of our divine Savior in the Most Blessed Sacrament is a gift worthy of our divine Friend.* Here He is as near to us as the ardor of His love demands, and yet so far away that our life of faith is not impaired. It is so quiet about the tabernacle, and yet choirs of angels surround it to adore their God hidden beneath the veils of the sacramental species. Everything about it is apparently lifeless, and yet nowhere on earth is life so intense as where Life Itself dwells in our midst. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens here which can impress our senses, and yet streams of grace issue forth from the Sacrament of the Lamb which fructify the fields of the Church so that they continually bring forth new flowers and fruits.

We all believe this, but frequently our faith in the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is not a fire which warms our hearts, but a cold truth which leaves us as unmoved as any other scientific proposition. Let us recall again and again that a church in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved is not an empty building, even though no man is within; it is not a museum stocked with pictures, statues, and other objects of art; it is really and truly the dwelling of the King of heaven and earth, who continually holds court there for our sake, to enrich us with the treasures of His divine heart if we will only come to receive them.

In the sacrament of His love, our Savior thinks of us day and night; His heart yearns for our presence, not that He requires us for His happiness, but because His love wishes to enrich us with His gifts. Day after day His dwelling is open to all; all without exception are welcome and may state their wishes. How highly we would praise the philanthropy of a wealthy and influential man who should be ready to receive all who first announced their coming, who should affably listen to each one, console and help him, and should send no one away without giving him a handful of gold. Our Savior in the tabernacle is such a wealthy and influential man. No one of upright heart comes to Him without obtaining assistance and leaving His presence enriched with treasures of grace. Yet unfortunately since so many Christians value a hundred pieces of gold more than they value a hundred spiritual gifts, our Savior with His gifts is deserted

in His tabernacle while in the street before the house where perchance a hundred pieces of gold should be distributed to all comers, the crowd would never thin. We do not realize what a treasure we have in our Savior hidden under the sacramental veils. But we shall understand it better if we deal oftener and more intimately with Him.

Our divine Friend is certainly not extravagant in His desire for external marks of reverence. He does not demand that we neglect all other business and come to Him day after day to render court service. He does not interfere at all in our work. On the contrary, if we work in the right way, He will consider all we do as done for Him and will reward us accordingly. But He is not so indifferent toward His friends as not to find it highly agreeable if they consecrate some stray moments to Him and visit Him. He expects, as a matter of fact, that we do not conduct our lives as though He were not present in the Blessed Sacrament. He complained bitterly to St. Margaret Maiy of the coldness of so many Christians toward the sacrament of His love.

To satisfy our obligations as Christians, we must appear in church on Sundays and feast days of obligation. Thousands come to the solemn services held in our churches on the occasion of feasts of special solemnity without being compelled to do so by any precept of the Church. This is praiseworthy. These are, so to speak, the court festivities of our divine King, a public profession of loyalty to His flag. But participation at these solemn celebrations can hardly be classified as visits of friendship. A friendly visit is a private visit or at least one made with a select few. We pay such a visit to our Savior if we go to greet Him when the church is deserted. Our divine Friend is very much pleased with such visits and is wont to grant readily whatever we ask of Him and to add many other graces which we do not even think of asking.

Reading the lives of the saints, we find that our Savior took special delight in bestowing on them on the occasion of these special visits His choicest proofs of affection. St. Alphonsus Liguori, a Doctor of the Church, gives a number of such examples in the introduction of his book, *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*, and adds that the saints cultivate this devotion so assiduously because we have no more beautiful jewel, no richer treasure, no more loving friend than Jesus in the thrice blessed Mystery' of the Altar. Most of the revelations of the devotion to the Sacred Heart made to St. Margaret Maiy were made during such private visits to the Blessed Sacrament. She is one of the eucharistic saints.

Why not make an attempt ourselves to see whether this devotion will produce in us as well such excellent fruits of salvation? It would indeed be extraordinary' if resting on the breast of our divine Friend in the Tabernacle did not exercise a salutary influence on our lives. Many a poor peasant woman and many a weary day laborer have long ago learned that treasures of grace may be had from our Savior in His tabernacle home. Shall we, who perhaps pride ourselves on greater knowledge and practical understanding of our Christian faith, permit these good souls to put us to shame; shall we, at the Judgment, stand before Our King with empty hands, while they appear loaded with merit? And if circumstances prevent us from visiting Our Savior in the Blessed Sacrament, we can send Him a hearty greeting from a distance, and commission our guardian angel and all the other angels to make up to Him by their love and reverence for the love and reverence which we would, but at the moment cannot, give.

3. *Our Savior desires a most intimate union with us in Holy Communion.* One of the greatest obstacles to fervent devotion toward the most holy Sacrament of the Altar is the fact that the Blessed Sacrament does not appeal to our senses. What is it externally but a frail, white host, which is hidden in a dark tabernacle? When Christ lay in the manger at Bethlehem, a little babe for love of us, He seemed to have almost reached the limit of self-annihilation. He could still die the shameful death of the cross, but here, surely, He had plumbed the depth beyond which even He could not go. And yet the love of our

heavenly Friend did not stop there. In the crib and on the cross He still appeared in form a man, a frail child in the one instance, a cruelly disfigured full-grown man in the other; but in the Blessed Sacrament He has hidden even His humanity, and appears as a little white wafer. Faith alone, on the authority of the changeless word of God, teaches us that our Savior is there present with His divinity and humanity.

“Not to sight, or taste, or touch be credit,
Hearing only do we trust secure.”

If Christ had not humbled Himself so profoundly for love of us, He would not have attained the main object of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, namely, intimate union with us. “The man Christ Jesus” is not a friend like other friends. After He had loved His own faithfully during His mortal life, He transcended all the bounds of love as the hour of His departure from this life drew near and, calling upon His omnipotence, hid Himself under the appearance of food and said to His disciples, “Eat, drink, this is My body and blood; do this in conunemoration of Me until I come” (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23 ff.). When we receive Holy Communion, we eat the living body of the Lord, His flesh and blood. Would this have been possible if the love of our Savior had not invented this marvel through which He abides in our midst, a living man, yet under such a form that we may take Him as nourishment for our souls? On the occasion when He made the first promise of this wonderful mystery, not only were many of the Jews scandalized and said: “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” but even many of His disciples said: “This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it?” (Jn. 6:53, 61). We know now how Jesus can give us His flesh to eat, and we also know that this saying is not hard, but contains the sweetest and most attractive mystery of our faith. The wonderful promise has now been verified: “He who eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and as I live because of the Father; so he who eats Me. he also shall live because of Me” (Jn. 6:57, 58).

After Holy Communion the heart of Jesus is physically near to our heart and effects most wonderful, sacramental transformations. The stream of life, which proceeds from the Father to the Son and to the heart of the Son, overflows into our heart and flows back from it. a fire of love to the heart of our Savior and to the source of all love, the Divinity. This ebb and flow of the stream of life is the highest effect of friendship with Jesus which can be attained in this life. “He who eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has everlasting life: and I will raise him up on the last day” (Jn. 6:55). No other sacrament is like this, a sacrament of love and friendship. This bread is not transformed into him who eats it, but transforms him into itself by the power of love, and by the same power it makes of many but one body. Through Holy Communion the faithful become one with Christ; in virtue of this sacramental bread all become, as St. Paul says, “one bread, one body” (1 Cor. 10:16, 17).

Since Holy Communion is by excellence the Sacrament of Love, we need not wonder that He, while revealing the devotion of love, the devotion to the Sacred Heart, emphasized Holy Communion as a means to prove our love for Him and to make reparation for all the coldness and indifference of men. O divine Savior, grant us the grace to rest frequently on Thy Sacred Heart in Holy Communion and to drink deeply from this fountain of love.

CHAPTER XIII

Under the Protection of Our Friend

"You have come to Jesus, the mediator of the New Testament, and to the sprinkling of blood which speaketh better than that of Abel" (cf. Heb. 12:24).

1. *Jesus is our daily sacrifice.* When Jesus gave the Sacrament of His body and blood to His Apostles at the last supper, He did not merely say: "This is My body, this is My blood," but: "This is My body which shall be sacrificed for you; this is My blood which shall be shed for you unto the remission of sins" (cf. Mt. 26:28; Lk. 22:19, 20). "To shed blood unto the remission of sins" means in Holy Writ to offer sacrifice, [footnote: Cf. Lev. 14:17; 17:11; Heb. 9:18-22.] and so the Church has always taught that Christ offered a real sacrifice at the last supper and commissioned His Apostles to offer this sacrifice until the end of time.

The Council of Trent briefly summarizes the teaching of Holy Scripture and Tradition as follows: At the last supper Christ wished to leave to His bride, the Church, a visible sacrifice in accordance with the requirements of human nature. Since He had called Himself the eternal High Priest after the order of Melchisedech. He offered to His heavenly Father His body and blood under the appearances of bread and wine, and commissioned His apostles and their successors in the sacerdotal office to do likewise. This is that clean oblation which God had predicted through Malachias (1:11) and which was to be offered to His name in every place among the nations. According to the teaching of the Catholic faith, then, these two truths are incontestable: In the Mass the body and blood of Christ is offered to God, and this offering is a real sacrifice.

It is illicit for a human friend to offer himself to God as a sacrifice for his friend. Only our divine Friend, Jesus Christ, can do this: "For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). But did He not offer this sacrifice on the cross and thus effect the salvation of the whole world? How, then, can we say that He offers Himself daily for us? The answer is that the holy sacrifice of the Mass and the sacrifice of the cross are not two entirely distinct sacrifices, but are most intimately related. By the sacrifice of the cross satisfaction had been rendered to God for the sins of the whole world, and merit accumulated to obtain all graces. But that this satisfaction and these graces might be applied to individual souls. Christ instituted various means of grace. One of these means is the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

In the sacrifice of the Mass the victim offered and the priest offering are the same as those of Calvary: in each instance Christ offers Himself to His heavenly Father, a victim for the salvation of men. Moreover, Christ does not render new satisfaction or merit new graces for us in the Mass; since for Him also death marked the end of the time of satisfaction and merit (cf. Jn. 9:4). Instead, He obtains for us the application of the merits of His bloody sacrifice (cf. Heb. 7:25). Hence, to a certain extent, the Mass is a renewal and continuation of the bloody sacrifice of Calvary, for in the Mass Christ offers Himself to His heavenly Father for us and applies to us the saving graces which He merited on the cross. This is the reason why the sacrifice of Calvary is symbolically represented in the Mass; the bloody sacrifice of Calvary

becomes the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass. On the cross the blood was drained from the body of Christ and this caused His death; in the Mass the blood of Christ is not separated from His body, for Christ can no longer die, but this separation is signified by a perceptible sign. The priest, in the name of Christ, pronounces the words: "This is My body" over the bread alone; and "This is My blood" over the wine alone. In virtue of these words of consecration, the bread is directly only the body of Christ, and the consecrated wine only the blood of Christ. In this fashion the separation of body and blood is signified by the sacramental signs, and the memory of the real separation of body and blood on Calvary renewed. Such is the teaching of the Catholic Church on the sacrifice of the Mass and its relation to the sacrifice of Calvary. [footnote: Council of Trent, Sess. 22. C. I, 2.]

Now let us examine how the sacrifice of the Mass is special proof of the friendship of Jesus Christ for us.

2. *In the holy sacrifice of the Mass Jesus Christ exercises in a very special manner His office of mediator between God and man.* We owe God, as His creatures, internal and external reverence. God is our supreme Lord and our first Beginning and last End. We must acknowledge our dependence on Him, we must adore Him as the supreme Majesty, and we must thank Him as our greatest Benefactor. The great crime of the infidel world is, according to the Apostle, that "although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, or give thanks" (Rom. 1:21). Christ explained the obligation of glorifying God to the Samaritan woman in these words: "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For the Father also seeks such to worship Him. God is a spirit; and they who worship Him, must worship in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:23, 24).

But what is all our reverence in comparison with the infinite dignity of God? And what is all our giving of thanks in comparison with the countless blessings which we have received from God and are continually receiving from Him? Can we at least testify that we honor and thank God to the best of our abilities? Or must we not rather admit that we do much less than we might do, and with greater fervor? Our divine Friend knows our weakness and insufficiency; He acts as our mediator and offers to His heavenly Father in the holy sacrifice of the Mass a sacrifice of thanksgiving and adoration of infinite value.³ If we unite ourselves with Christ in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, we need not lose heart, since we can worthily adore and thank God through our Friend and Savior. To love and reverence God is the noblest act of which men or angels are capable. Under what great obligations we are, then, to our Savior! With what enthusiasm we ought to attach ourselves to His person, since He has made it possible for us to exercise our noblest activity with a perfection which of ourselves we could never attain. When we, united with Christ, adore the Father by that supreme act of adoration, the holy sacrifice of the Mass, we are true adorers in spirit and in truth such as the Father seeketh.

Our second relation to almighty God may be summed up in the one word — dependence. We depend on God each moment of our life for our being and activity. God can end our life whenever He pleases, as we read in the Psalm (103:29): All creatures wait on Thee; "if Thou turnest away Thy face, they shall be troubled: Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust." Whether the times are good or bad, whether fruitful years supply us lavishly with food or unfruitful ones bring want and misery, whether good health or infirmity is our lot, all this depends on God. He blesses our undertakings with success or allows them to fail, bestows earthly riches or takes them away (cf. Eccles. 11:14). But in the supernatural order, we need God's help even more. Without the assistance of His grace we cannot merit for eternal life, but, on the contrary, shall inevitably fall victims to our enemies.

To obtain these gifts of God, we must pray as Christ taught us to pray in the Our Father. Without prayer we shall wait in vain for gifts from on high. And yet, O God, must we not admit that our prayers are very wretched; that they play but a secondary role in our lives; that all too often, when our lips are occupied with prayers our thoughts are busied elsewhere, and that the desire to gain temporal advantages or to avoid temporal evils prompts us to pray more frequently than desire after heavenly treasures? Here again the love of our Savior comes to our assistance. If we unite ourselves with Him in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, He offers His merits to His heavenly Father for us. He knows best which temporal and spiritual blessings will be most conducive for our salvation, and obtains them for us by His all-powerful intercession. The Mass is a sacrifice of supplication and the best means to commend our concerns to God and to obtain help from Him through Jesus Christ our Lord. Through the Mass we have "confidence to enter the holies in virtue of the blood of Christ" (Heb. 10:19).

There is a third relationship which binds us to God, one which is by no means pleasant. We are sinners and deserve punishment for our sins from the divine Justice. For this reason, the Psalmist prays: "And enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight no man living shall be justified" (Ps. 142:2). If God were to judge men according to the demands of strict justice, our race would long since have perished. Think of how many abominations and infamies, how many secret and public sins insolently challenge God each day, even in only one large city. Then multiply this by the countless number of other cities all over the earth. If God should reveal all these sins to us according to their number, heinousness, and enmity towards Him, we would pale with horror and cry out: "My God, how can You tolerate this? Why does not the fire of Your wrath come down from heaven and wipe out this accursed race?"

But we know the reason why. Each day Jesus appears before His Father and restrains the arm of His justice as Moses did of old when God had determined to destroy the Israelites because of their sins (cf. Ps. 105:23). With the rising sun a series of Masses daily begins a westward course round the inhabited globe, from farthest north to farthest south, and in them the Mediator of the New Law offers His blood on thousands of altars as a satisfaction for the sins of the world. We know from faith that the sacrifice of the Mass is truly an expiatory sacrifice unto the remission of sin and the punishment due to sin. Of course, hardened sinners will no more escape their punishment than did the Israelites of old when God said to Moses: "Lead this people whither I have told thee. I will not destroy it but in the day of revenge will visit this sin also of theirs" (cf. Exod. 32:34). In the New Testament, God visits men with various punishments for the sins they have committed and to keep them from committing others. St. Peter, the apostle, warns the just not to be surprised at the trials of life which tend to purify them and to promote their salvation. But if the judgments of God do not spare the children of the house, how terrible will be the end of the godless? A horror without end (cf. 1 Pet. 4:17 ff).

In what does the expiatory mediation of Christ in the holy sacrifice consist? God is angry with men because of their sins, and in holy indignation deprives them of those rich graces which would bring about their conversion. But our divine Savior in the holy sacrifice of the Mass appeases God's wrath, so that God, "appeased by this sacrifice, bestows grace and the gift of penance, and through it remits enormous sins."⁴ In what sad condition we should be if God, because of our sins, deprived us of those abundant graces without which we cannot work out our salvation! How much more terrible would the punishments of God with which He visits this world not be if the blood of the Lamb did not plead for mercy on so many altars!

3. *How shall we reward that love of our divine Savior which so ceaselessly intercedes with God for us on our altars?* The answer to this question is obvious. We ought to assist at Mass daily with

devotion; or if that is not Possible, as often as we can. And if we cannot be present physically, let us unite ourselves in spirit with our divine Savior, assist spiritually at the sacrifice which He offers for us, honor God through Him, pray for heavenly gifts through Him, place ourselves under the protection of our best Friend, who is, at the same time, the beloved Son of the heavenly Father.

The more intimately we unite ourselves to our Savior in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the more abundantly shall we participate in the fruits of this sacrifice infinitely pleasing to God. The priest acts as an official representative in every Mass, even a low Mass, and offers the sacrifice in the name of the Church for all the faithful and, as the prayers used at Mass indicate, also for those without the fold, that they may be converted.

But in addition to this general fruit, the holy sacrifice of the Mass is the source of special graces for individual Christians; first of all, for those for whom it is especially offered and, secondly, for all those who assist at it devoutly. Since the priest who offers the sacrifice is the official representative of Jesus Christ, he may determine to whom the special fruits shall be applied. This is explicitly taught by the Church, [footnote: Council of Trent.] It was true of the sacrifices of the Old Testament and is true as well of that of the New (cf. Heb. 5:1 ff). The Church obliges all bishops and all pastors to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass on certain days for the souls intrusted to their care, [footnote: *Codex Juris Canonici*, can. 339. 466.] She obliges the faithful to assist at Mass on all Sundays and holydays of obligation, [footnote: *ibid.*, can. 1248.] All who becomingly assist at the holy sacrifice offer it with the priest and participate, therefore, in a special manner in its fruits. The holy sacrifice is at one and the same time the sacrifice of Christ, of the Church, and of the faithful who are present, [footnote: That the assisting faithful offer the sacrifice with the priest, is often emphasized in the prayers which the priest uses at Mass. Thus: "Orate, fratres, ut meum ac vestrum sacrificium acceptabile fiat." "Omnium circumstantium pro quibus tibi offerimus, vel qui tibi offerunt hoc sacrificium laudis," etc.]

By assisting at the holy sacrifice, then, we offer God through Christ veneration of infinite value; we atone for our sins and satisfy for the punishment due them, because Christ offers the satisfactory merit of His deeds for us; we participate in the merits of Christ with which He obtains many graces from His Father for us; we place ourselves under the protection of our divine Friend whose blood pleads for mercy for us. Of course, not all temporal pain is thus eliminated; for every man must carry his cross; however, the vindictive anger of God is averted, and suffering, from being a mere punishment, becomes a means of salvation so that all things work together unto good (cf. Rom. 8:28). We are secure under the protection of our divine Friend, which is accorded us in the holy sacrifice; within the heart of our Friend, we are safe from the snares of our enemies, from all danger to our souls, from the blows of the divine anger. O Jesus, grant that we may realize more perfectly what treasures You offer us daily through friendship in the holy sacrifice, and help us to appropriate these treasures more fully in accordance with the intentions of Your divine heart.

CHAPTER XIV

Faithful Unto Death

*"Be ye steadfast and unmovable, my beloved brethren, in the work of the Lord,
knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (Cf 1 Cor. 15:58).*

1. *Our Savior accompanies us through life with His means of grace.* The efficacious love of the heart of Jesus for man begins with the first days of man's life. Hardly has the child opened its eyes to the light of this world when our Savior appears on the scene to work miracles of grace in its soul; and He does not leave it until the last breath has been drawn. The friendship of Jesus endures even unto death. There is a wealth of meaning in the phrase, "faithful unto death," so easily enunciated, but so difficult of execution. It has been verified in the friendship of our Savior as it never has been verified in any other friendship. St. John tells us in the Apocalypse that he heard our Savior called "faithful and true" (19:11). And since He is faithful and true. He will complete the work of salvation which He has begun in us (cf. Thess. 5:24).

At our entrance into this world, we were separated from Christ because of the Stain of original sin, and unable to go to Him. But Christ came to us in holy baptism as though He had been waiting longingly for us. Who baptized us? A priest? Certainly. But the priest was but an instrument in the hands of a Higher One. A priest of himself can neither cleanse the soul from sin, nor produce in it sanctifying grace. Only our Lord and God can do that. St. Augustine emphasizes the fact that Christ has not ceased to baptize. He writes: "He it is who baptizes in the Holy Ghost: He has not ceased to baptize, but still baptizes, not through physical ministrations, but through the invisible activity of His majesty." [footnote: St. Augustine. *Contra Litteras Petilianas* 1, 3, c. 49, n. 59.] Although Peter baptizes. He it is who baptizes; although Paul baptizes, He it is who baptizes; although Judas baptizes. He it is who baptizes!" [footnote: Cf. *In Joan, tract. 6. n. 7.*]

It was at baptism that Christ pressed us to His divine heart for the first time and flooded our souls with streams of love and grace that had their source in His own heart. Before we were able to perform a single good act, He chose us from among thousands and destined us for an intimate community of life with Himself. "For as many of you," writes St. Paul, "as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). We are in God's eyes no longer clothed in the form of the first Adam, but in that of His only-begotten Son. Indeed we have become members of a new, mystical body, the Church, and all together constitute the mystical body of Christ. "For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body. . . . Now you are the body of Christ, and member for member" (1 Cor. 12:13, 27). Since the day of our baptism, we have been as intimately united to Christ as the members of our body are united to us. The interests of our heart are the interests of His; and the interests of His heart must be the interests of ours. Hence, we are consecrated to the heart of Jesus by the sacrament of baptism.

If a child dies immediately after baptism, it rests eternally in unspeakable bliss at the heart of its Redeemer. But the lot of the vast majority of those baptized is that they merit the victor's crown in serious combat (cf. Tim. 1:18, 19; 6:12; Tim. 2:3 ff; 4:7, 8). Hence our Savior not only bestows supernatural life on His own in baptism, but strengthens them for the combat through the sacrament of confirmation. He had told His apostles: "I will send the Paraclete to you; but stay in the city till you be endued with the power from on high" (cf. Lk. 24:49). The Holy Ghost, who on that first Pentecost descended upon the apostles, was indeed the source of their strength; He made them unconquerable in the confession of faith. This Holy Spirit the apostles imparted to the baptized by the imposition of hands and by prayer (cf. Acts 8:15 ff), a

practice that has remained in the Church even to the present day. The bishops, as successors of the apostles, lay their hands on the faithful and pray over them that they may receive the Holy Ghost and obtain strength to confess courageously and openly the faith that is in them; for the Holy Ghost is to remain with the Church forever to be the comforter and helper of all the faithful (cf. Jn. 14:16). In this sacrament it is the bishop who imposes hands and who pronounces the words; but He who sends the Holy Ghost is Christ, who said: "I will send the Paraclete to you" (Jn. 16:7).

But soldiers who fight strenuously need nourishment. What does our Savior do? He gives us nourishment, and this nourishment is His body and blood. When the priest at Mass says: "This is My body, this is My blood", he is the representative of Christ who transforms the bread and wine into His body and blood, and invites us, saying, "Come and eat, this is the bread of eternal life. Who eats of this bread shall live forever" (cf. Jn. 6:48, 50). On His part Jesus is prepared to give us this bread daily even to the last day of our life. United to Christ through baptism so as to constitute one mystical body with Him, strengthened for the combat by confirmation, nourished as often as we please with the body and blood of Christ, we journey through this life toward our heavenly home. Does our heavenly Friend allow us to want for anything?

The fact is, we should need nothing more if we would always be faithful to our Friend. But too often we reward these great blessings with base ingratitude. Far from loving our Savior, we offend Him by our sins, separate ourselves from Him and join the ranks of His enemies. And does our Savior do? It seems as though He cannot forget the old friendship. Just like the father of the prodigal, He daily looks to see whether we shall find the way which leads back to Him; and as soon as He sees us retracing our steps in sorrow. He leads us to the priest who tells us His name: "I absolve you from your sins." These words, too, with their efficacious power, are the words of our Savior. Thus His faithful friendship conquers our infidelity; and full of joy. He leads us once more to the eucharistic banquet table and invites all the angels to rejoice with Him, because His child that was lost is found again, that was dead is risen again. Perhaps this joy will soon be extinguished by renewed sins. Nevertheless, while life endures, our merciful Lord is always ready to pardon the repentant sinner. Contrasted with the dark shadows of our infidelity, the fidelity of our Lord shines the more resplendent.

Faithful unto death. The decisive hour for the faithful and the faithless comes at last, the hour on which eternal happiness or eternal misery depends. It is then, above all, that our Savior stands at our side. How many souls His love has snatched from the burning at that last dread moment! He comes to us a viaticum for that last difficult journey to eternity. With Jesus in our hearts, we are to fight our last fight. And if perchance there are vestiges of sin still in our souls at that supreme moment, He again sends His minister to anoint us with the oil of salvation and pronounce the words: "Through this holy unction and through His most tender mercy may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed." If our soul is free from all attachment to sin, the sacrament of extreme unction prepares us for immediate entrance into heaven. From the first effects of baptism until the final effects of the last sacraments, our Savior is constantly at our side with His means of grace. Truly His is a heart faithful unto death.

2. *Our Savior is faithful unto death also with His interior graces.* Is our Savior at our side only with external graces? By no means. We forget all too frequently that He dwells in our souls as God where He works for us ceaselessly. St. Paul admonishes us: "Do not say in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring down Christ); or who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring up Christ from the dead)" (Rom. 10:6 ff.). For He dwells in your heart virtue of a living faith.

Through sanctifying grace Christ makes it possible for our good works to bear fruit for eternal life. In themselves, no matter how excellent our good deeds are, they are valueless for eternal life if they do not receive their value from sanctifying grace. What beauty is there in a diamond while it lies hid in the dark? It possesses none. But bring it into the light, and the radiance of its beauty sparkles from a thousand facets. Similarly, God has given us the natural faculty to perform morally good acts; but if they be not elevated by sanctifying grace, they are diamonds enveloped in darkness. Once, however, they are illumined by sanctifying grace, they attain a beauty which makes them objects fit to embellish the heavenly Jerusalem, and to fill the participants at the heavenly banquet with delight. This is "light in the Lord," the conduct of the "children of the light" (Eph. 5:8), the justice of Christ in us. [footnote: Council of Trent, Sess. 6, C. 16.]

Christ prompts us to perform good works by His actual graces so that, as Pope St. Celestine tells us, every holy thought, every pious resolution, every act of good will has its origin in Him without whom we can do nothing, [footnote: Denzinger-Bannwart. *Enchiridion*, n. 135] If we would be as anxious to correspond with all the promptings of grace as our Savior is in bestowing them, we should all soon be saints; for Christ exhorts our hearts and confirms us in every good work and deed (cf. 2 Thess. 2:16). Happy are we, if we hear and follow His suggestions.

Since the enemies of our salvation never break off their stubborn attacks, our Savior never ceases to surround us with His grace as with a strong shield, which the fiery darts of the enemy cannot pierce. We shall thus contend unconquerably firm in the Lord and in His grace if we are faithful to our heavenly Friend (cf. Eph. 6:10 ff). Christ fights with us and in us. He helps us in all the needs of this life and does not desert us in our greatest need at the hour of our death. Without His assistance we should fall a prey to our enemies. But confiding in Christ, let us say with the Apostle: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? ... But thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:55, 57). Christ is "the Author of life" (Acts 3:15), who has said of Himself: "I am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in Me, even if he die, shall live" (Jn. 11:25). If the Author of life is with us, we need not fear death.

3. *Fidelity for fidelity.* What ought we to offer our Savior in return for His fidelity but fidelity until death? "Be thou faithful until death: and I will give thee the crown of life" (Apoc. 2:10). How often have we prayed: "May my baptismal promises remain inviolate forever!" Our baptism was a contract with Christ. As the Apostle tells us, we do not say at baptism: "I am of Paul, or I am of Apollo, or I am of Cephas." "Has Christ been divided up? Was Paul then crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1:12, 13). All of us were baptized in the name of Christ, all of us vowed fidelity to Christ; and how often we have renewed our baptismal promises at Holy Communion! Jesus Christ is our redemption. His cross, our banner. We know no other name in which we may be saved save the name of Jesus. We know no other banner that can lead us to victory save the banner of Christ, the cross. The admonition of St. Paul to Timothy applies to us: "Fight the good fight of faith: lay hold on the life eternal, to which thou hast been called. ... Conduct thyself in work as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ... One who enters a contest, is not crowned unless he has competed according to the rules" (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 2:3-5).

Today more than ever before, the enemies of Christ are audacious, they blaspheme Him, ridicule Him, and spare no pains to overthrow His kingdom. And shall we, who have been consecrated soldiers of Jesus Christ in confirmation, be less zealous, less courageous, and contend less perseveringly for the interests of our heavenly King and Friend? Can it be of no consequence to us whether our Savior is honored or despised? If that were true, it would be a sign that we are not friends of Jesus: for St. Thomas Aquinas tells us: "A friend considers the prosperity and adversity of his friend as his own, and hence he rejoices at

the one and grieves at the other. . . . All his desires are for the welfare of his friend; and if the friendship is really intimate, he will spare no pains to ward off whatever might prove detrimental to his friend. When his friend is injured by word or deed, his zeal is at once aroused and he does all in his power to protect him.” [footnote: St. Thomas. *Summa Theol.*, 1-2ae, q. 28, a. 1, 4.]

We have no end of opportunity at present to prove the sincerity of our friendship for Christ. To oppose to the frenzy of unbelief a manly profession of faith, to equal if not to surpass the tireless activity of the enemies of Christ with zeal for all that may promote the glory and honor of Christ, never to permit that our devotion to our cause be surpassed by that of our opponents to theirs — these are proofs of faithful love for Jesus.

We nourish our souls so often with the body and blood of Jesus Christ! May this banquet be for us what it was for St. John Chrysostom, who wrote: “Let us return from this banquet lions breathing forth fire, made terrible to the enemies of Jesus Christ, our Leader constantly before us, and mindful of His faithful friendship.” [footnote: St. John Chrysostom, in Joan. *Hom.* 46, 11. 3.]

But if we are unable to be other John Chrysostoms, we can at least cast ourselves at the feet of our divine Redeemer and tell Him how much it grieves us that His love is reviled by men; we can make reparation and offer Him all the satisfaction that the angels and saints in heaven and the just on earth render Him; we can ask Him to have mercy on sinful men and grant them the light to recognize their sins and contrition to amend their lives. Let us consider it one of the main purposes of our existence to spend ourselves in an effort to secure reparation for all the ingratitude with which the love of the Sacred Heart is returned. If we are really friends of Jesus, our love must prove itself by deeds as His love has proved itself by bestowing incomparable benefits on us. O Jesus, we desire to be faithful to Thee until death; we wish to live, labor, suffer, and die for Thee we swear fidelity to Thee for time and for eternity.

CHAPTER XV

Faithful Beyond the Grave

I go to prepare a place for you. And . . . then I am coming again and I will take you to Myself (cf. Jn. 14:2, 3).

1. *The faithful love of Jesus goes beyond the grave.* Every purely natural companionship ceases at the grave, for it cannot cross the boundaries of the kingdom of death. A friend can indeed grieve for his friend, he may lament his loss with a soul full of pain, but he can no longer help him even with all the wealth and power on earth. Death is ruthless, it tears asunder the most tender bonds, separates the most intimate union, leads the friend into an unknown, dark land from which no message can be sent to the surviving friend. The grave marks the end of natural, human companionship.

This is not true of our heavenly Friend. Friendship with Him is stronger than death. Indeed, beyond the grave its true glory is first really revealed. From His tomb the risen Savior sent this message to His friends: "I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God" (Jn. 20:17). But before He ascends He remains with His disciples for some time to console them. It had never been known until that day that one dead consoled his surviving friends. Only the friendship of Jesus endures beyond the grave. He filled the hearts of His own with peace and great joy, and He Strengthened them so that nothing more could separate them from His love.

He ascends into heaven before their eyes and is seated there at the right hand of the Father, who tells Him: "Sit on My right hand until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool" (Heb. 1:13). There He will rule until He has brought His kingdom here on earth to its final consummation and has conquered all His enemies. The last to be overcome will be death, which Satan brought into the world at the beginning of time by sin (cf. Rom. 5:12). Death itself will be condemned to death, all dying will have an end: and he who has power over all perishes at the hands of our Savior, that all principalities inimical to God shall be destroyed (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24 ff.). "The Lamb will overcome them, because He is the Lord of lords, and the King of kings" (Apoc. 17:14).

A friend may be ever so powerful, but with death all earthly power ceases. How many at one time desired the friendship of the king of Babylon, who then was the most powerful prince on earth. But he, too, succumbed to death. The prophet Isaias graphically describes how the great ones of antiquity went to meet the king of Babylon in the underworld and derided him, saying: "Thou also art wounded as well as we, thou art become like unto us. Thy pride is brought down to hell, thy carcass is fallen down: ... How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? How art thou fallen to the earth, that didst wound the nations? ... Indeed, thou hast been brought down to hell, into the depth of the pit" (Isa. 14:9 ff). Such is the end of the friendship of the mightiest on earth.

The words of the prophet Osee: "O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy bite" apply to Christ (Osee 3:14), for "Christ is on the right hand of God, swallowing down death" (1 Pet. 3:22). He has conquered the mighty the empire of death and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to servitude (cf. Heb. 2:14, 15). "O death, where is thy victory" (1 Cor. 15:15). Death and the empire of death were cast into the pool of fire (cf. Apoc. 20:14). Christ reigns with His saints "and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Lk. 1:33).

But He is not satisfied merely with His own glorification. Even in heaven He watches over His Church (cf. Mt. 28:20). Jesus Christ is our intercessor with the Father (cf. Rom. 8:34). He is always mindful of us; all that we do and suffer for Him is noted in the book of life (cf. Apoc. 20:12); even the smallest act is not overlooked and He shall reward them all and assign a place to all His friends in the kingdom of heaven, each according to his works. "In My Father's house there are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you; and when I have prepared a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am, you also may be. You shall see Me again and your heart shall rejoice and your joy no man shall take from you" (cf. Jn. 14:2, 3 16:22). The redeemed of the Lord come with praise, and everlasting joy is upon their heads. Joy and gladness is their portion and sorrow and mourning have fled away (cf. Isa. 35:10). It is thus that the friendship of our heavenly Friend proves itself even beyond the grave.

2. *Just as the friendship of Christ did not cease with His death, it will not cease with ours.* Whoever dies as a friend of Jesus will remain His friend for all eternity. The friendship of Jesus is more than a mere friendship coextensive with life on earth, it is a friendship that is to endure for the life beyond

the grave. While on earth we are on a pilgrimage to our Friend. "While we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:6. 7); but we are full of hope; for we do not walk in darkness, but in the light (cf. Jn. 12:46). For the present this light of faith is but a dim lantern shining in a dark place; but the day will dawn (cf. 2 Pet. 1:19); then we shall see our heavenly Friend, our Savior, as He is, not veiled by faith, but distinctly, face to face. His humanity and divinity. The result will be that we shall be like Him in glory, in blissful contemplation in never-ending love and joy (cf. Jn. 3:2). Knowledge and love is the food of the soul. This is the reason why the kingdom of heaven is like a banquet of which the blessed, gathered about the Savior, partake, where they eat and drink with Him (cf. Mt. 8:11; Lk. 22:30). "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure" (Ps. 35:9).

At the deathbed of her children the Church prays: "May Jesus Christ appear to thee with a mild and cheerful countenance, and give thee a place among those who are to be in His presence forever. . . . May Christ Jesus, the Son of the living God, place thee in the everblooming garden of His paradise; and may the true Shepherd own thee for one of His flock. . . . Oh! may it be thy happiness to behold the Redeemer face to face; to be ever in His presence, in the blessed vision of that Eternal Truth which is the joy of the elect." Such is the lot of the friends of Christ after death.

The friendship of Jesus endures, indeed, beyond the grave, but its effects will then be different. During our life on earth the friendship of Jesus is manifested chiefly by His merciful love; He receives each repentant sinner and pardons him his sins; despite all shortcomings. He is patient and indulgent. All this ceases with death. He who does not die a friend of Jesus cannot then become His friend, but is lost for all eternity. And if His friends depart this life stained with imperfections, they will not receive a merciful pardon, but must atone for them in purgatory until their souls are pure and fit for entrance into heaven. Mercy and pardon cease and in their place we have judgment and justice. Each one shall receive according to his works.

Nevertheless, the loving heart of our Redeemer still find a way to reconcile justice and mercy for His friends in purgatory. The souls detained there, despite all their sufferings, are full of consolation, because they know that they love Jesus and are loved by Him and that His friendship will be theirs for all eternity. They are incapable of desiring anything except what Jesus desires; they rejoice at the fact that the obstacle which still separates them from Jesus is being removed by their sufferings. The dearer they are to the heart of Jesus, the greater is their satisfaction. Their condition is a marvelous combination of joy and pain. Can you imagine a sick man who, while he suffers excruciating bodily pain, receives some good news which he has long passionately expected? He would suffer and rejoice at the same time. This is an inadequate comparison and it does but vaguely picture the condition of the souls in purgatory.

But our Savior is not satisfied with this; He does still more. He inspires the Church and individual Christians to come to the assistance of the souls in purgatory by prayer, good works, acts of self-denial, patience under suffering, the gaining of indulgences, and above all through the celebration of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Through His Church He has not only set aside one day of the year which is especially consecrated to the relief of the poor souls in purgatory, but He offers Himself daily on a thousand altars to His heavenly Father for the faithful departed that they may the sooner be released from their pains, [footnote: Council of Trent. Sess. 22. c. 2. can. 3; Sess. 25. docr. on Purgatory.] The life of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque is full of instances which show how well pleased the heart of Jesus is when His friends in purgatory obtain help from His friends on earth. It is the wish of Jesus that all those who honor His divine heart, both the living and the dead, remain in intimate communion with one another through prayer.

The love of Jesus for His friends and their love for Him is the common bond which unites the saints of heaven, the just on earth, and the souls in purgatory into the communion of saints. This does not merely consist in an external classification, but is an intimate communion of life, because the supernatural life, which they all share has its origin in the same source, and each lives for the whole, and the whole body for each. Yet the just on earth and the souls in purgatory are, to a certain extent, members not yet fully grown. When all shall have attained their full stature, life on earth will be over, purgatory will be no more, and there will be only the Church triumphant and its glorified head, Christ.

Only then will the friendship of Christ with His saints appear in all its greatness. Only then shall we understand what great things the love of Christ has done for us; then we shall realize His amiability so perfectly that nothing will be able to prevent our loving Him with the whole ardor of our soul; then this love will fully satisfy the thirst of our souls for happiness. This is the eternal marriage supper of the Lamb with His bride, the Church. The angel, who acted as St. John's escort in Iris vision of this banquet, said: "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Apoc. 19:9); for the Lamb will there prove Himself the faithful Shepherd of His friends and "shall guide them to the fountains of the waters of life." to the possession and enjoyment of the Divinity, and "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Apoc. 7:17). This is the perfect triumph of the heart of Jesus.

3. *The glorified heart of Jesus is the object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart.* The object of this devotion is not the heart of Christ separated from His body, not the dead heart of Christ, but the living heart as it pulsates in Christ glorified. The Jansenists maintained that the devotion to the Sacred Heart was theologically unsound, because in it a dead heart, independently of its union with the Divinity', was venerated. Pius VI in the year 1786 condemned this affirmation as an insidious calumny of the faithful lovers of the Sacred Heart, [footnote: Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion*, n. 1563.] We honor the heart of Christ as it really is; but it is the heart of our glorified Savior in heaven. There His physical heart throbs in His breast, there He is consumed with love for us, there His whole human nature is united hypostatically to the Second Person of the Divinity. The heart of Jesus is, of course, also present in the Blessed Sacrament and is honored there, but His sacramental condition presupposes His natural condition and depends on it. The Sacrament will one day cease, but the heart of Jesus will live forever in heaven and will be the joy of His friends. In the Holy Eucharist our Savior is the companion of our exile, our food on our pilgrimage to eternity. In heaven our exile will have ceased and our pilgrimage will have ended. Then that verse of the Eucharistic hymn will be verified: Grant that in heaven with Thee, Faith's veils removed, we see Thee face to face, [footnote: From the hymn, *O Esca Viatorum*. Fac, Ut remoto velo, aperta coelo cernamus facie."]

It was His glorified heart that our Savior revealed St. Margaret Mary when He commanded her to honor His Sacred Heart. She describes this vision for us. "The Sacred Heart appeared to me as a brilliant sun of glorious light, the rays of which struck my heart. ... On another occasion Jesus Christ, my loving Master, appeared to me resplendent in glory, His five wounds shining like five suns. Flames everywhere issued from His sacred humanity, but especially from His adorable breast which seemed to be a very furnace; His breast opened and I saw His loving and amiable heart which was the living source of these flames. It was then that He explained to me the ineffable marvels of His pure love, and to what lengths it had driven Him, even to love men from whom He received but ingratitude and indifference."

This vision of St. Margaret was obviously a vision of the glorious Savior as He is in heaven; for there Christ is the resplendent sun which illumines the city of God (cf. Apoc. 2 1:23). The devotion to the Sacred Heart unites us in a most intimate and tender manner with our Savior as He lives in heaven, with His heart which there pulsates with love for us. We cannot wish for or find a more beautiful, more exalted,

more amiable object of veneration and enthusiastic devotion than the glorified God-man. And this King of glory wishes to be our Friend if only we will be His friends. He requests His friends (and what a reasonable request it is) that they return His love with love and make reparation for all the injuries which men heap upon Him. And even this request He makes solely for our sake, because He wishes to inspire us with noble sentiments and make our hearts as much like His as possible. O Jesus, re-create our hearts after the pattern of Thy own.

CHAPTER XVI

The Sorrow of the Heart of Jesus

"He began to be saddened and exceedingly troubled. Then He saith to them: My soul is sad even unto death " (Mt. 26:37, 38).

1. *The devotion to the Sacred Heart is principally a devotion of reparation.* Men continually heap insults and injuries of all kinds upon our divine Savior which cause bitter pain to His loving heart. How can we claim the title of friends of Jesus if these irreverences leave us cold and indifferent? True love rejoices at the good fortune of the beloved and weeps with him in his sorrow (cf. Rom. 12:15). How would we feel if a severe trial should overtake us and those of whom we could justly expect some show of sympathy gave none, and acted as though our suffering did not concern them at all? Shall we act so toward our Savior and add this bitter dreg, lack of sympathy, to the overflowing chalice of His passion? Or is it perhaps a matter of indifference to Him whether or not we show Him how much His sufferings affect us?

In the year 1674, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque saw our Lord in vision. He showed her the ineffable marvels of His love and the ingratitude of men which He received in return; then He said: "This (ingratitude) is much more painful to Me than all I suffered in My passion. If men rendered Me some return of love, I should esteem little all I have done for them, and should wish, if such could be, to suffer it over again. ... Do you, at least, console and rejoice Me by supplying as much as you can for their ingratitude."

On the Sunday during the octave of Corpus Christi in the year 1675, our Lord again appeared to His servant, showed her His heart, explained again the excess of His love, and said: "In return, I receive from the greater part only ingratitude by their irreverence and sacrilege, and by the coldness and contempt which they have for Me in this Sacrament of love. And what is most painful to Me is that they are hearts consecrated to Me." Then He commanded her to have a special feast established in the Church to honor His Sacred Heart, to make reparation for all the outrages which He suffers, especially during the time of solemn exposition. Our Lord, therefore, has revealed that the sins of which ungrateful men are guilty against the Sacrament of the Altar cause Him pain, and that He expects sympathy and reparation from His friends because of these injuries.

The Church has complied with the wishes of her divine bridegroom and established the feast of the Sacred Heart. In the Mass of the feast she holds up to us our crucified Redeemer. His side opened by the thrust of a lance as though to make a way for us to enter His divine heart. She puts these words on His lips: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow" (Lam. 1:12). "My heart bath expected reproach and misery'. And I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort Me, and I found none" (Ps. 68:21). Here we have a clear and earnest exhortation to all lovers of the Savior not to let Him suffer alone, but so far as they can, to satisfy His desire for comfort in His sorrow.

In an encyclical on the devotion to the Sacred Heart dated June 28. 1839, Pope Leo XIII says: "The primary object of this devotion is to atone for the sin of ingratitude on the part of so many by suitable acts of self-oblation, of love, of piety, and to reconcile God and the human race through this most holy heart." [footnote: Since the above lines were written, the great encyclical of Pius XI on the Sacred Heart, which takes for its subject reparation has been published. The author undoubtedly would have quoted from this encyclical. (Translator.)] Hence there can be no doubt that if both our divine Savior and His Church desire that we make reparation and satisfaction for all the insults and injuries which men inflict on the Sacred Heart in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. This is motive enough for every friend of the Savior diligently to practice the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

2. *To what extent do the indifference, coldness, and malice of men grieve the Sacred Heart?* There have been men who were consumed by such hatred of their loving Savior that they forced open tabernacles, scattered the hosts on the floor, and trod them underfoot. Did they perhaps think that they were thus causing Jesus physical pain and dimming His eternal glory' and joy? If they did, their hatred was blind and senseless. Since His resurrection, our Savior no longer suffers. Would it be fitting that He who delivered forever the blessed from all pain (cf. Apoc. 7:15, 17) should Himself still suffer? Moreover, in the Blessed Sacrament human perversity cannot reach even His glorified humanity; it can reach only the sacramental species, not the reality' which they veil. Hence the frenzy' of hatred is powerless and senseless.

Nevertheless the hatred and indifference of men does grieve our divine Savior. But how? Christ is God and man, and as man He is the King of heaven, exempt from all suffering. In Sacred Scripture we read of God: "And God, seeing that the wickedness of men was great on the earth, and that all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times, it repented Him that He had made man on the earth. And being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart. He said: I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth" (Gen. 6:5. 6). Here God speaks of the sorrow which men caused Him. This is human language by which God wishes to explain to us how much sin is opposed to His sanctity'. When man commits a mortal sin, he contemns the moral law. But the moral law is ultimately God Himself: hence, sin is the greatest possible opposition to God. God loves the good; but love of the good is at the same time hatred of evil. The happiness of God consists in the love of subsistent Goodness, His sorrow is displeasure at every' free act of creatures opposed this Goodness. The friendship of God for the good is enmity for evildoers. Since God wills that Goodness and the good shall ultimately triumph, He must at the same time will that evil and evildoers shall be vanquished and banished forever. Although God has created man from pure love and destined him for eternal bliss, man's stubborn persistence in sin transforms this love into eternal enmity, and his bliss into eternal misery. The frustration of the eternal, loving designs of God is the sorrow of God, not pain in God Himself, but in those whom God had destined for eternal beatitude. This is the sorrow our Savior experiences as God at the offenses of men.

But in a certain sense Christ suffers even in His glorified humanity because of the insults offered Him in the Blessed Sacrament. In the first place, Christ, as man, loves His heavenly Father more intensely than all other creatures. This is the reason He hates the insult offered God by every mortal sin more than anything else and would be ready to do anything, to suffer anything to prevent sin if such were the will of God. In the second place, Christ loves each human being with an ineffable love. Did He not shed His blood for each of them and sacrifice His life under fearful tortures to lead them to heaven? And in gratitude for this exceeding great love, He receives only indifference, contempt, scorn, and hatred. He sees His blood, His life, His benevolence, and His love rejected. It is impossible that this be a matter of indifference to Him: He must oppose with all the fibers of His soul such infamous and pernicious conduct.

But He has, to speak figuratively, bound His hands. He Wishes to save men through the instrumentality of men. He has placed the destinies of many in our hands. By our prayers, penances, and atonement, by our love of God and neighbor, by our good works, we are to appease the anger of God, to stem the flood tide of sin, to obtain for sinners the grace of repentance and for the just continual progress in perfection. A means well calculated to attain these ends is the devotion to the Sacred Heart; for, according to the Words of St. Margaret Mary, this devotion is the means chosen by Christ to save a vast number of souls from perdition and to bring them back to the paths of salvation. Therefore, if Christ lives in us, if we are moved by His spirit, we shall make fewest efforts to comply with His wishes by the practice of this devotion.

3. *The insults of men, nevertheless, cause the soul of our Savior real pain.* This is a mystery which we forget too often. We content ourselves with the belief that our Savior is now immune from all pain. We do not remember that the sins which we now commit caused Him real anguish at a time when He could suffer like other men, indeed could suffer more than other men.

Just as Christ, as the future judge of the world, must know accurately every act which He has to judge, so it was fitting, too, that, as Redeemer of the world, He knew for what sins, not only in general but in particular even to the smallest sin, He had to satisfy. Sacred Scripture clearly indicates that the knowledge of Christ extended to distant and future events, even to the secret thoughts of men. Christ told Nathanael what he had been doing while at a distance before Philip called him, and revealed to him his inmost thoughts so that Nathanael exclaimed with admiration: "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God" (Jn. 1:47 ff). How often we read: "But He knew their thoughts" (cf. Lk. 6:8; 9:47; 11:17, etc.). He foretold His own passion in detail (cf. Mk. 10:33, 34). He foretold the betrayal of Judas, the denial of Peter, the destruction of Jerusalem, and many other future events; hence we cannot doubt that Christ knew the acts of all men. This has been the teaching of all the great theologians for centuries; [footnote: Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* III. q. 10, a. 2.] and the highest Roman tribunal has condemned the rash opinion of some who maintained that Christ did not know the whole past, present, and future, [footnote: *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1918, 282.]

Christ knew even in detail while He walked among men all the sins which would be committed against Him and especially against the sacrament of His love to the end of time. He knew the opposition of the faithless against the revelations of His love; He knew the contempt, the blasphemies which have been uttered by heretics against the Blessed Sacrament: He saw the irreverent conduct of many Catholics during divine service; their indifference, their coldness, the unworthy communions, the profanations of hosts, the desecration of churches, and all the other enormities which are perpetrated against the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

Because of His foreknowledge the difference in time was, to a certain extent, annihilated. What happens today was present to Him then and all unworthy conduct which would now cause Him pain, if He were still capable of suffering, wounded Him then in His inmost being. Man can, therefore, still cause real suffering to our Lord. Even if He no longer feels the pain, He did feel it in the past. He who contemns our Savior now, stood then with His persecutors under the cross and blasphemed Him. He who hates Him now, crucified Him then with His enemies who were beside themselves with hatred. St. Paul speaks of Christians who crucify Christ anew and deliver Him up to opprobrium (cf. Heb. 6:6).

Christ has satisfied for all sins, even for those directed against His love and against the work of redemption. But how such ingratitude must have wounded His heart! As He hung on the cross, His dying prayer was the twenty-first psalm: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Mt. 27:46.) We read in this psalm: "But I am a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people. All they that saw Me have laughed Me to scorn: they have spoken with tire lips, and have wagged the head" (Ps. 21:7, 8). Whoever offers insult to our Savior, then insulted Him with His enemies and grieved His Sacred Heart bitterly in His last hour. But the converse is also true. Whoever resists temptation or prevents others from falling into sin, diminished the sufferings of our Savior. Whoever sympathizes with our Savior, whoever shows by word and deed that Christ did not suffer and die in vain for him, whoever, in fine, bears much fruit, consoled our Savior on the cross.

If we had stood under the cross and had been able to offer our Savior some help and some consolation in His frightful sufferings, would we not have done so gladly? We can do so by our present sympathy, by our zeal in accomplishing His wishes, by offering satisfaction for the many insults offered Him by men, by cultivating and spreading the devotion to His Sacred Heart. May those words of our Savior be verified in us: "You are they who have continued with Me in My trials. And I appoint to you, as My Father has appointed to Me" (Lk. 22:28, 29).

CHAPTER XVII

Sympathy With the Sorrows of the Heart of Jesus

*"Could you not watch one
hour with Me?" (Mt. 26:40.)*

1. *Devotion to the mental sufferings of Christ is a devotion peculiarly adapted to the spirit of our age.* Our age in contrast with past ages emphasizes the personal element rather than external facts. We find that in philosophy psychology is predominant, in literature questions of character development are treated by preference, in religion the inner life is emphasized. If we admit that this tendency is justified, we have at once a recommendation for the devotion to the Sacred Heart; for it is mainly a devotion of an internal nature; it attempts to comprehend the sentiments of Jesus; it deals with the most excellent personality

which ever graced our earth; it strives to understand the mental anguish of our Savior and to sympathize with it.

At the dawn of the Christian era, the great obstacle to the spread of Christianity was the passion and death of its Founder, the crucified Christ, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23). This stumbling block could not be removed by demanding sympathy with the Crucified. On the contrary, neither Jews nor Gentiles would have anything to do with a God worthy of compassion; they wanted a mighty, omnipotent God whom nothing could resist. So the problem of the Church was to show how the passion and death of Christ was a glorious victory over all adverse powers, a victory over sin and over the ruler of the empire of sin. Read the words and letters of the apostles. They never speak of Christ deserving of sympathy. They speak often enough of His passion and death, but always as a means which brought about the glorification of God and of Christ (cf. Acts 2:25 ff). The crucified Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24). He will reign "until He hath put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:25). The only sympathy that is demanded of us is that we suffer with Christ, that is, carry our cross after Him so that we may also be glorified with Him (cf. Rom. 8:17). The cross, an emblem of shame, was transformed by Christ into a glorious emblem of victory. This fact had repeatedly to be emphasized for Jews and Gentiles alike.

Even in the writings of the Fathers of the Church the conception of the sufferings of Christ is so predominant that we scarcely find a reference to compassion with the sufferings of Christ. This is sufficiently evident from the selections from the Fathers found in the breviary for holy week. Pope Leo the Great begins his homily on Palm Sunday by recalling that the anniversary of the passion of our Lord is a day of great joy for the whole world and that among all the works of God none has so much appeal as subject for meditation as the sufferings of our Redeemer, who, clothed with the weakness of man, conquered the devil. On Holy Thursday we read from St. Augustine, who says: "Consider the glory of the cross. This cross, once an object of the ridicule of our enemies, now crowns the brows of kings. Its success has proved its power. The world has been conquered not with iron, but with wood." The lessons on Good Friday and Holy Saturday are of the same tenor, paeans of victory.

Only after the necessity of emphasizing for Jews and Gentiles the victorious power of the cross no longer made itself felt, did meditation on the passion of Christ as an object of our sympathy become more general. In the twelfth century we find in St. Bernard sympathetic utterances about the passion of Christ which must be counted among the tenderest blossoms of mysticism. St. Francis of Assisi was so devout to the bitter passion that God deigned to imprint in his body the holy stigmata. Blessed Angela of Foligno, St. Bridget of Sweden, and many other saints have feelingly described the passion of our Lord. St. Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises* tells us that in the meditations on the passion of Christ we must set ourselves to work with much energy, and force ourselves to grieve, to be sad, and to lament at the sight of what our Lord suffers in His humanity, and ask God to feel sorrow with Christ, the Man of Sorrows, sensible affliction with the afflicted Christ, tears and inward pain for the great pain which Christ suffered for us. Countless books of meditation and of devotion follow this suggestion of the saint in regard to the sacred passion. The devotion to the Sacred Heart, therefore, fully satisfies the present trend of thought, and by its revelation God has accommodated Himself to the needs of our age.

2. *The Bible teaches us the attitude of mind Christ entertained in regard to His sufferings.* The mental sufferings of our Savior are nowhere so clearly manifested as in the agony in the garden. The evangelists tell us that Jesus began to grow sorrowful, and to be sad, and to be heavy (cf. Mt. 26:37, 38; Mk. 14:33). The extent of this mental anguish is expressed in the words: "My soul is sorrowful even unto

death." And little wonder! Before the eyes of His imagination He saw clearly, in all their detail, the terrible sufferings which were to begin that very night and were to end only in the afternoon of the following day in the terrifying death on the cross. His whole nature must have recoiled from such suffering. His life was the most valuable of all lives, His body a marvel of the handiwork of the Holy Ghost, a most delicate and sensitive instrument of the soul, and therefore highly susceptible to pain. And this valuable life, these delicate and perfect members, our Savior was to Surrender to His enemies to maltreat and rend, until, covered with wounds from the soles of His feet to the crown of His head, His torn limbs stretched on the cross and pierced with nails, He breathed His last, surrounded by His foes. All this our Savior foresaw in His agony in the garden, and the vision filled His soul with sadness and horror.

Repugnance seized Him; He was to sacrifice such perfect treasures to destruction to satisfy for the sins of the whole world, as the prophet Isaiah had foretold: "But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins . . . and by His bruises we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). He Himself had said that His blood would be shed unto remission of sins (cf. Mt. 26:28). Christ, therefore, saw how all sin was put on His shoulders (cf. Isa. 53:6), because He had assumed the responsibility for the payment of this enormous debt (Mk. 10:45). Think of the loathing His pure soul had for all sin, since He clearly saw its essential malice. And now the most disgraceful and vulgar crimes which had been committed since the beginning of time or would still be committed before the end of the world overwhelmed His soul as though He alone were responsible for them all. What indescribable disgust and loathing His soul must have experienced, greater by far than that which would be experienced by a man fastidiously clean who is suddenly thrown into a sewer full of the vilest filth and corruption.

Besides, our Savior recognized that many, very many, would reward this proof of His immense love with coldness and indifference, even with hatred and contempt, and that, despite all His efforts, they would still rush into eternal ruin. Only if we could fully grasp the greatness of His self-sacrificing love, would we be able to understand the anguish which such ingratitude caused Him.

We can well imagine that there can be pain, and that possibly there has been pain, which, considered merely as physical pain, was greater than the pain which our Savior endured. But mental anguish comparable to His no man has ever suffered, nor can ever suffer, because no man has such knowledge of what sin really is as He, because no one can love as He loved and hence can feel ingratitude so keenly and bitterly. The sweat of blood endured in the Garden of Olives, the agony of death which cast Him prostrate on the ground (cf. Lk. 22:43, 44) testify to this more eloquently than words.

Such was the agony of soul which Christ endured in the garden and of which He told St. Margaret Mary Alacoque: "My mental anguish there caused Me keener sufferings than all the rest of My passion, because I saw Myself entirely deserted by heaven and earth and overwhelmed with all the sins of mankind. There I stood before the sanctity of God who crashed Me in His anger without consideration for My innocence . . . as though He had forgotten that He was My father in order to sacrifice Me to His just anger. No creature can comprehend the greatness of the sufferings which I there endured."

Another fact was revealed by our Lord to St. Margaret Mary; "He let me know," she writes, "that all these pains and all this contempt was present to Him from the first moment of His incarnation and that from that time forward the cross was, so to say, planted in His heart and that to prove His love for us He accepted everything, all the humiliations, the poverty, the pains which His sacred humanity had to endure during the whole period of His terrestrial life, as well as all the injuries to which His love would expose Him on our altars in the Most Blessed Sacrament."

We find a confirmation of this revelation in Holy Writ, for St. Paul writes that Christ, at His entrance into this world, offered Himself a sacrifice to His heavenly Father to supplant all the earlier sacrifices (cf. Heb. 10:5 ff). During His public life on earth Christ repeatedly reminded His apostles of the sufferings which awaited Him in Jerusalem (cf. Mk. 8:31; 9:30; 10:33, 34; Mt. 26:2). He calls His sufferings a baptism and says: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized: and how distressed I am until it be accomplished" (Lk. 12:50). On one occasion, when some Gentiles wished to speak to Him, He mentioned the fact that He would be glorified also by the Gentiles, but only after His death on the cross; and at this reminder of the future, His soul was troubled to its depths and He prayed: "Father, save Me from this hour." But He added at once, as though correcting Himself: "No, this is why I came to this hour," namely, to glorify the Father by My death; "Father glorify Thy name" (Jn. 12:23 ff.).

The physical sufferings of Christ from the Garden of Olives to Calvary lasted only about eighteen hours. Yet the whole life of Christ was hard and difficult; and what is more, His mental sufferings, the anguish of His soul because of His pre-vision of all that men would do to Him, were never for a moment out of his consciousness and made His life a veritable way of the cross.

3. *We must not forget the anguish of soul of our Savior nor recall it coldly and with indifference;* but we must meditate sympathetically on whatever He has done for love of us to promote our salvation, and gratefully return love for love. The man who really believes that the Son of God came from heaven for love of us and suffered such indescribable anguish in His humanity must, if he possesses a truly human heart, burn with love of Him, sympathize tenderly with His sufferings, especially those of His soul, and try to make reparation for all the ingratitude of men. We Catholics believe in the incarnation of the Son of God; we believe that He has redeemed us by His passion and death; we believe that He requests a return of love, sympathy, reparation; and we may take it for granted that we do wish to comply with this request of our best Friend. But how?

Love demands a return of love; unless we return His love, Jesus cannot love us with the love of friendship. Although He loves all men, He, nevertheless, distinguishes between those who belong to Him as His own and those who do not. In His prayer He commends His friends to His heavenly Father in a special manner; for He adds: "Not for the world do I pray, but for those whom Thou hast given Me" (Jn. 17:9). He calls them His friends because He has revealed Himself to them without reservation (cf. Jn. 15:15). Our devotion to Jesus must correspond to His complete and perfect devotion to us. Our life must be His. Everything, really everything that we think, wish, desire, do, must be consecrated to Him. Such is the exhortation of the Apostle (cf. Col. 3:17). The whole value of our life is measured by our union with our Savior; without Him our life is valueless (Jn. 15:5, 6). Let us, then, consecrate ourselves, our actions, and our sufferings to our Savior, so that for the future we shall live only for His love and glory.

The love of Jesus for us is a self-sacrificing love which has imposed on Him the greatest sufferings of body and soul. If we are truly friends of His, we shall not forget His sufferings, but remember them sympathetically. We shall not content ourselves with contemplating merely His external sufferings, but shall make the much greater anguish His soul endured for our sake a special object of veneration. Our Savior asked St. Margaret Mary to taste with Him to the last drop the agony in the garden one hour each week during the night from Thursday to Friday, and to make this meditation prostrate on the ground in order to sweeten to some extent the bitter sorrow of His loneliness. Our Savior does not demand this of us; yet we can, nevertheless, see in this request how pleasing to Him devotion to His anguish of soul is. For a heart burning with love of Him, that is sufficient; it will certainly render Him this service of love.

The third object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, expressly declared to be such by our Savior, is reparation for all the injuries to which He is exposed at the hands of so many in the sacrament of His love and which grieve Him so bitterly. He asks for humble and reverent reparation. Surely, a reasonable request! The King of heaven and earth might easily obtain satisfaction in other ways; but He desires this satisfaction which is at once honorable and salutary for us. a satisfaction which proceeds from love and at the same time works an increase of love in us. True devotion to the Sacred Heart, therefore, implies zeal for Christ's honor, growth in His love, devotion to Him, work for Him, union of our sufferings with His so that the disciple may become like the Master, and the servant like His Lord, both here on the way of the cross and hereafter in glory and beatitude.

CHAPTER XVIII

A Heart That Suffered More Than All Others

*"Now the passersby were
jeering at Him" (Aft. 27:39).*

1. *Christ crucified is mocked by men of all classes.* It was a source of great sorrow to our Lord in His agony in the garden that He was alone and deserted by all. As He hung on the cross, He was not alone. But what of the company that surrounded Him? The twenty-first psalm describes them for us: All they that see Me, laugh Me to scorn. They open their mouths against Me. as a lion ravening and roaring. The council of the malignant encompasses Me like dogs (cf. Ps. 21:8, 14. 17). It was the time of the feast of the Passover and there were many people in the city. Curiosity drew not a few to Golgotha. They passed by the cross and wagged their heads saying: "Vah. Thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days buildest it up again, save Thyself. Come down from the cross." The chief priests and the scribes mocking said to one another: "He saved others; Himself He cannot save, or if He can let Him descend from the cross that we may see and believe" (cf. Mk. 15:29 ff.). These were the insults which His own nation heaped upon its Messiah; high and low. the refined and the vulgar had no words of sympathy for Him, only bitter sarcasm. Even the heathens took part in this cruel sport. The soldiers had already ridiculed His kingly dignity by crowning Him with thorns, giving Him a reed scepter, genuflecting before Him, and spitting in His face. Now they mocked Him. offered Him vinegar to drink and said: "If Thou art the king of the Jews, save Thyself" (Lk. 23:36, 37). Not satisfied with having condemned Jesus unjustly, Pilate had an inscription fastened to the cross, which was intended as a bitter taunt: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (Jn. 19:19). He ridiculed the King of the Jews in order through Him to ridicule the Jews. Even one of the robbers who was crucified with Him blasphemed Him (cf. Lk. 23:39, 40).

For three hours our Savior had to endure this cruel ordeal of abuse. What thoughts were then uppermost in His mind? A sick person on his bed of pain expects consideration and sympathy at the hands

of those who come near him: each inconsiderate act, each cruel word, which would be passed by unnoticed in health, now wounds him to the depth of his soul and makes his sufferings more unendurable. Hence, we brand harsh conduct toward the seriously sick as heartless cruelty. Our Savior on the cross suffered the bitterest of pains. Think of the wounds in His hands and feet which supported His weight; of His body torn by the scourge, of His head braised by blows from clenched fists and pierced by sharp thorns, of the excessive thirst caused by the loss of blood, of the fever which consumed His whole body — truly horrible sufferings. Now add to this unimaginable physical suffering the ceaseless jeers, the calumnies about His mission as king, prophet, and worker of miracles — are such things not dreadfully painful for a sensitive heart? But the heart of our Savior was more sensitive than all others, because it was the noblest of all human hearts. He was perfectly conscious of His complete innocence. He knew that He was really sent of God as Messiah, as King, as Redeemer. He had gone up and down the land doing good, teaching the ignorant, consoling the sad, healing the sick, so that people said of Him: “He has done all things well” (Mk. 7:37). And this was the gratitude which He reaped for His good works — contempt, mockery, derision from His chosen people whom He loved so ardently. That the Gentiles treated Him so cruelly did not wound Him half as much; to them He was just a criminal condemned to death. But that His own people thus rewarded His love, that was bitter beyond all comparison. “For if My enemy had reviled Me I would verily have borne with it. . . but thou, a man of one mind, My guide, and My familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with Me; in the house of God we walked with consent. . . they have defiled His covenant” (Ps. 54:13, 14, 15,21).

To have acts of kindness rewarded with ingratitude, love rejected and ridiculed are the most painful experiences which man can undergo. These experiences were the portion of our Lord to such an extent that we are incapable of comprehending the greatness of the pain they caused Him. On Good Friday the Church puts the words which God addressed to the Israelites by the mouth of the prophet Micheas, on the lips of our Redeemer: “O My people, what have I done to thee, or in what have I molested thee? answer thou Me” (Mich. 6:3). Then the individual benefits are enumerated and contrasted with the ingratitude of the Jews: “I have brought thee out of the land of Egypt into a good land, and thou hast prepared a cross for thy Redeemer; I have planted thee a chosen vineyard, and thou hast given thy Redeemer vinegar to drink and hast pierced His side with a lance, etc.” These lamentations of Good Friday are well calculated to make us realize vividly the sufferings of our crucified Redeemer and to move us to compassion.

2. *The heart of Jesus is wounded by the ingratitude of men of all centuries.* Did the procession of those who passed by the cross and jeered, end with the death of our Savior? Alas, it did not. This endless succession of scoffers extends through all ages and will cease only when the cross of Christ will have appeared in the heavens and the coming of the Son of Man will have announced the final judgment.

As our Savior hung on the cross, He saw not only those who then actually stood on Calvary and mocked; His gaze penetrated the future — and what did He see? Nineteen hundred years have passed since the death of Christ. If we count as Christians all men who can be called such by any title, their number reaches six hundred and seventy millions. In contrast with these there are one thousand millions who are not Christians. So by far the greater number of men still do not believe in the Savior, do not love Him, and if they have heard of Him, are either indifferent or full of enmity toward Him.

Now consider that the Son of God assumed our nature for love of *all* men and died on the cross for *all* (cf. Tim. 2:3 ff.; 1 Jn. 2:2). How painful it must then be for His heart that so many millions in all centuries have not found the way to Him, but remain in darkness and in the shadow of death and are kept by the devil in the hard slavery of idolatry and of sin. How dreadful is the condition of the pagans as St.

Paul describes it for us in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans! Was it not painful to the soul of our Savior that so many men in each century, for love of whom He suffered and died, live in paganism?

But far more culpable is another form of paganism, which is found not in distant lands but in our very midst. Do we not hear in our own country the fatuous cry: "We cut ourselves off from Christ, away with Him, away with His doctrine, away with His law!" This is the cry of the neopagans — for the most part faithless renegades who at one time vowed fidelity to Christ and who have deserted now to His enemies. Books are published in which the gospel stories of Christ are branded as fables or Christ Himself is stigmatized as a perverse dreamer. And these books are eagerly read by hundreds of thousands. Every aspersion is cast at Christ. They have not even hesitated to call Him a monomaniac, [footnote: Cf. *Christ and the Critics*, H. Felder. Benziger, 1924. Vol. 2.]

O eternal Wisdom, how trifling were the insults uttered against Thee by Thy enemies on Calvary when compared with the utterances which Thy enemies do not hesitate to bring forward today. But Thy heart tasted their bitterness in the hour of Thy agony; each insult, each blasphemy was a dart in Thy heart glowing with love even for these men. As a partial excuse for Thy enemies Thou couldst still say on Calvary "They know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). But today they know very well what they are doing. They want to hate Thee and Thy doctrine; they want to destroy Thy kingdom; they want to overthrow Thy throne; they want to make atheism the ground and foundation of a state entirely engrossed in earthly possessions and earthly pleasures.

An incredibly nauseating and corrupting literature is spreading through our country, and from this morass of corruption a thousand-voiced choir daily raises its blasphemous chant heavenward. The words of the Apocalypse are verified: "And there was given to it a mouth speaking great tilings, and blasphemies. . . And it opened its mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven" (Apoc. 13:5, 6). Derision of God, derision of our Savior, derision of His works and saints, derision of all those who hope for a heavenly, eternal life never ceases in our land.

Seeing how badly the heart of our Redeemer is treated by our fellow countrymen, we may well ask ourselves: "May our Savior not expect of us, His friends, that we shall do all in our power to expiate to some extent the shameless treatment He receives?" But unhappily, it is precisely at the hands of His friends that our Savior meets with one of His greatest sorrows, for even among Catholics there are many who view this horrifying spectacle with indifference. And there are those who even seem to find pleasure in satisfying their morbid curiosity and stimulating their jaded nerves by reading such vile literature. Do they read it, perhaps, because their station or position demands it? They do not! They read because the consciousness of what they owe Christ has been dulled.

3. *And we, what shall we do?* We also acknowledge with the Apostle: "I live in the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). Let us also draw the conclusions which he draws: "I believed, and so I spoke" (2 Cor. 4:13). Our Savior is being reviled. Therefore, let us speak to Him, let us cast ourselves on our knees before Him, tell Him how much it grieves us that men insult Him so, ask Him for pardon and grace for those unfortunates who cast aside the true life and choose instead eternal death. Let us unite ourselves to the heavenly choir who ceaselessly chant in Christ's honor: "The Lamb is worthy to receive . . . honor, and glory, and benediction" (Apoc. 5:12). Even though the number of those who blaspheme our Savior is very great, the number of those who daily bless Him in heaven is greater. We can say with the prophet Eliseus: "There are more with us than with them" (4 Kings 6:16). We prefer to join in the angelic hymn of praise rather than blaspheme with the evil spirits and their slaves.

Because we believe, we will speak also before men. We do not wish to give our Savior cause to be ashamed of us; therefore, we must not be ashamed to confess Him before men, but must openly and boldly profess our faith in Him whenever duty or reason demands it. The more fiercely persecution rages, the more fervently ought we to renew our vow of fidelity toward our Savior. Even should fidelity become difficult because of the threats of the enemy, we know that we are fighting under the banner of the cross and that we shall conquer in this sign. As long as our will to be faithful to Christ remains firm, external reverses are victories, even as Christ crucified, though apparently conquered, in reality was triumphant.

Under the cross on Calvary His enemies were many, His friends but very few — His mother, two pious women, and the disciple whom He loved (cf. Jn. 19:25, 26). Who stood on the side of the victor, the great masses or the little gathering? On that first Good Friday, the Jews were confident of their victory' and said to Pilate: "That seducer said, while He was yet alive: After three days I will rise again" (Mt. 27:63). Two days later they were compelled to lie and bribe in order to prevent the soldiers from publishing their defeat to all the world (cf. Mt. 28:11 ff); forty years later, the temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the kingdom of the Jews were destroyed, and the kingdom of Christ established.

Mary' stood under the cross, her heart pierced by the sword of grief; there she became queen of martyrs, queen of saints, queen of heaven. O divine Redeemer, we offer Thee the love of Thy mother, her sympathy, her fidelity, her heroism in atonement for our coldness, indifference, infidelity, and cowardice. O Mary, intercede for us with thy divine Son and obtain for us an increase of love, true, tender sympathy the sufferings of His divine heart, and greater and more manly fidelity .

"O Thou Mother! fount of love!
Touch my spirit from above.
Make my heart with thine accord:
Make me feel as thou hast felt;
Make my soul to glow and melt
With the love of Christ my Lord."

CHAPTER XIX

Grief of the Heart of Jesus at the Blindness of Men

*"If thou also hadst known . . . the things
that are for thy peace" (Lk. 19:42).*

1. *Jesus is the Light of the world.* When we wish to express the idea that something is very disagreeable to us, we say that it is against our nature, that it is at variance with our inmost being. This is the relation that the willful blindness of men bears to the inmost nature of our Savior.

St. John sums up for us the nature of the Son of God in these words: "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. . . . It was the true Light that enlightens every man who comes into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world knew Him not" (Jn. 1:4, 9, 10). The life of the spirit is knowledge and the love which springs from knowledge. Whatever is a source of knowledge is called the light of the spirit, just as the sun is the light of the visible world, because it makes all things visible. The Son of God is the spiritual and eternal Word by which God the Father enunciates His perfect comprehension of Himself. God is Truth. The Father is the knowing and speaking Truth; the Son is the consubstantial Truth spoken by the Father. Because He is the Truth, He is the Light, pure, undimmed Light without blemish or admixture of darkness.

This Light, since time first was, has shone upon every man who was of good will, just as the sun shines for all who do not hide themselves from its rays. The sun shines only by reason of its nature; the divine Light shines not only because of Its nature, but also because of Its will; for It is not only Truth but Love. It was love which prompted this divine Light to appear in our midst clothed with our nature, then to become in an entirely new sense the Light of the world.

The world is illumined by the eternal Light when it is turned toward It; it is in darkness when it is turned away from this eternal Light. The parallel here with our earth is perfect; the hemisphere turned toward the sun is illumined, that turned away from it is in darkness. When the sun has set, we light all manner of lamps; but these are but poor substitutes which illumine only a few points of the darkened earth and would not be able to prevent the universal extinction of men, animals, and plants if the sun did not rise again with its life-giving rays. When men turn away from the eternal Light, they die a spiritual death, an eternal death, no matter how many other lamps they may light; these artificial lights may indeed serve as substitutes for a short time and within narrow limits; but all of them together cannot become a life-giving sun. He who trusts to them alone remains in the night of death.

What is the source of the light which we use at night? Its source is, after all, ultimately the sun, which has stored for us in wood, coal, rainfall, animal and plant substances, potential light which we use when the sun does not directly dispel the darkness. In like manner all spiritual light has its origin in the eternal Light of God. Even the clearest human insight and the keenest intelligence do not owe their existence and excellence to themselves. All of them were made, made by the eternal Word, without whom nothing was made. The source of all human knowledge is uncreated Truth, for He has created each human soul according to Its own image and endowed it with the faculty to know truth. It has given man the visible creation as an object on which to exercise his intellect and thus to enrich it with truth. However much infidels may pride themselves on their scientific attainments, all their knowledge and all their ability is a gift which they owe to the eternal Wisdom, and to the only-begotten Son of God. Christ in His divinity is the source of their light; He has given them this light through love even though He foresaw that they would use it against Him.

When the world with its participated wisdom did not recognize in creation the wisdom of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:21), but rather detained the truth of God in injustice (cf. Rom. 1:18), the eternal Wisdom again had compassion on men and personally appeared in their midst to lead them back to the light by teaching them the truth.

Jesus came as the Orient from on high to enlighten a world sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death (cf. Lk. 1:78, 79). He said: "I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me, does not walk in the darkness but will have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12). The Light of Life is God Himself. Christ has shown us by His preaching the way that leads to this Light. After He had restored vision to the man born blind, He

said: "As long as I am in the world. I am the Light of the world: hence. I restored sight to this man born blind that all may conclude that I am really the spiritual Light of the world for all those who wish to have their spiritual blindness cured." The man born blind was one of those who sought this spiritual Light: for when Christ asked him after the cure of his physical blindness: "Do you believe in the Son of God?" he answered: "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?" Jesus answered: "It is He that talks with you." At once he fell on his knees before Him and adored and said: "I believe, Lord." Then Jesus said to the multitudes: "For judgment I am come into the world. All who are spiritually blind, but, like this man born blind, desire the light will see. And they who see, who pride themselves on their wisdom, and would fain believe that they no longer stand in need of enlightenment, will become blind" (cf. Jn. 9:5,35 ff.).

2. *Jesus laments the deliberate blindness of men* which is inimically opposed to His nature as light and to His love as the dispenser of light. When Jesus had explained that His revelation was a judgment for those who presumed that they saw, some Pharisees asked Him: "Are we also blind?" Our Savior answered: "If you were blind through no fault of your own, you should not have sin. But now you say: 'We see,' and self-sufficiently reject the light which I offer. Therefore, you remain hardened in your unbelief; you are of the number of those who see and become blind" (cf. Jn. 9:40, 41).

At the very beginning of His public life Jesus said to Nicodemus: "I come from heaven whence man has never yet ascended and am a messenger of God. He who believes in Me. will not be judged; for by faith he is united to the eternal Light, whence man derives all supernatural vitality. But who does not believe is already judged, because he cuts himself off from the Light and chooses as his portion darkness." The Light came into the world, but men preferred the darkness to the Light. Thus they have judged themselves and proved that they are devoted to the works of sin. One who does evil and perseveres in doing evil is kept from the Light by his evil conscience; because in the Light the evil of his acts would be reproof. But he does good works, is a child of the Light; his deeds are radiations of the divine Light. They are spiritually related to the eternal Light, they come from the Light and lead to the Light (cf. Jn. 3:13, 18 ff.).

With the prospect, sad indeed for His loving heart, that so few were prepared to receive the Light, our Savior appeared in the midst of His people. He knew that most of His countrymen were far too deeply enmeshed in pride and worldliness to break their bonds and prepare themselves to receive the light. He reminded them that even John the Baptist had given testimony of Him. "But". He added, "although John was a burning and shining light, you did not permit that he show you the right way, and instead amused yourselves for a time with the novelty of his doctrine (cf. Jn. 5:33 ff). Many, whom you despise as sinners, have listened to his words, done penance for their sins, and found the path of salvation; but you, because of your self-righteous justice, have remained in darkness" (cf. Mt. 21:31. 32).

All the admonitions of our Savior were in vain. In a final attempt He warns them once more toward the end of His life: "Only a little while shall I remain with you as the Light. Use this opportunity and be enlightened by the Light that you may not fall a prey to darkness. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, that you may be the children of Light" (cf. Jn. 12:35, 36). The Evangelist adds sadly: "And whereas He had done so many miracles before them, they did not believe in Him that the saying of Isaias the prophet might be fulfilled: He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart that they be not converted and saved" (cf. Jn. 12:37 ff.). Deepening darkness of soul and incapacity to receive grace is the punishment meted out to those who resist the Light.

When Jesus saw that, despite all His efforts for the salvation of His people, Jerusalem and the Jews had fallen under the curse of God. His loving heart was filled with such grief that He wept and said:

"If you only had known the things that are to thy peace. But now, through your own fault, they are hidden from your eyes. Therefore, days will come upon thee when your enemies will beat you and your children flat to the ground and leave no stone upon a stone, because you have not known the day of your visitation (cf. Lk. 19:41 ff.). Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not. Behold your house will be made desolate" (cf. Mt. 23:37, 38). If even the prophet in the Lamentations (3:48 ff.) is at a loss for words to express his sorrow at the destruction of Jerusalem, who can understand the grief of the heart of Jesus at the willful blindness of men, since His love is so much greater?

3. *We must be children of the Light* and so atone to our Lord for men's culpable rejection of the Light. The sin of deliberate rejection of the Light will continue to the end of the world and continually cause our Savior new grief. The words of the Evangelist remain true when he says that many men love darkness rather than the Light (cf. Jn. 3:19). Their understanding is darkened, they are alienated from the life which comes from God, hedged about by ignorance and hardness of heart (cf. Eph. 4:18).

Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews: "I have come [as Messiah] in the name of My Father, and you do not receive Me. If another come in his own name, him you will receive" (Jn. 5:43). This prophecy was soon fulfilled. The Jews longed passionately for a messiah after their own heart, one who would deliver them by the sword from the power of Rome. Hence they fell an easy prey to fomenters of sedition, revolted, and perished miserably in great numbers in the destruction of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 70. Those who survived did not, however, put aside their hatred for Christ, but persecuted the Christians whenever and wherever they could. This hatred flamed forth afresh when in the second century the false messiah Bar Cochba incited the remaining Jews to the second war against the Romans. This uprising also was quelled in a bloody manner (A.D. 135); nevertheless, the Jews did not give up their vain hope for a messiah. Christ has foretold that it will be thus to the end of time. Not only among the Jews, but also among the Christians, teachers of heresy will appear and say: "I am the Messiah"; and they lead many astray.

As a consequence of the Reformation in the sixteenth century numerous new sects have arisen with new messiahs as their leaders, beginning with the Anabaptists of Munster down to the hundreds of sects of our own day. Many of them wish to replace Christ's work with something better; others allow Christ to stand, but, as a matter of fact, separate men from His truth by distorting His doctrine. The free-thinkers of our day look upon every eloquent braggart as a leader in whom they confide more than in the Incarnate Wisdom of God. It is really incredible what miserable spiritual sustenance is good enough for them, provided only that they need not follow the light which Christ has brought us. They hear the praises of Buddha, Zoroaster, and Mohammed sung, and listen devoutly; only, away with Christ. Poor mortals! Atheism of all shades including Red, has raised up the materialistic state as the messiah; it promises indeed a heaven — right here on earth; and after that nothing. Millions have embraced this new messiah — millions more may yet do so. Their doctrine is simple enough: "The teaching of Christ is utterly false; it takes from man the joys of life and consoles him with the hope of a life to come. Follow us. We shall make you happy here below so that you shall want no other happiness."

And what happens when millions are deceived by this specious reasoning? They are promised wealth, and receive poverty; they are promised an abundance of food, and they suffer hunger and want; they are promised a universal brotherhood, and they reap hatred; they are promised heaven on earth, and they get a foretaste of hell. Men cannot turn from the light with impunity; when they do, all human happiness languishes and dies.

Let us tell our Lord how much it grieves us that so many turn their backs on His light, which they deem of little importance, and prefer instead miserable seducers. Let us beg Him through the love of His divine heart to open the eyes of these unfortunates that they may see before it is too late the abyss toward which they are running. Let us tell Him that we, as children of the light, shall ever walk in His light; let us ask Him to enlighten the eyes of our souls more and more in order that we may see clearly what a treasure we possess in Him here below, and what immeasurable happiness He will be to us in the life to come.

CHAPTER XX

Grief of the Heart of Jesus at the Indifference of Men to Salvation

"The wisdom of the flesh ... is not subject to the law of God, nor can it be" (Rom. 8:7).

1. *The cause of men's indifference to salvation is worldly self-love.* In his treatise, *The City of God*, St. Augustine tells us that there are two kingdoms, a heavenly kingdom and an earthly kingdom, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil. The motivating principle of the subjects of the earthly kingdom is frank love of self carried even to contempt of God; that of the subjects of the heavenly kingdom, unreserved love of God even to contempt of self, [footnote: St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, I, 14, c. 28.] In another work the saint distinguishes between the virtue of charity and concupiscence; he defines charity as a tendency of the soul which strives to enjoy God for His own sake, and all else for God's sake; concupiscence, on the other hand, as a tendency of the soul which seeks to enjoy creatures for their own sake without any reference to God. [footnote: St. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christ.*, I. 3, c. 10, n. 16.] Holy Writ distinguishes in the same sense between love of God and love of the world (cf. 1 Jn 2:15), between serving God and serving Mammon (cf. Lk. 16:13).

Since we know on the authority of Christ Himself that the one service excludes the other, it follows logically that the children of this world, who are attached with every fiber of their hearts to earthly treasures and pleasures, have no appreciation for heavenly and divine realities. Even man must choose between finite and infinite possessions. The children of this world thoughtlessly choose the finite and strive to be happy without God.

A very common argument by which many deceive themselves and which has caused the loss of many souls, may be summed up in these words: Let us first enjoy the world; there will be time enough to serve God later. Men who argue this way take as their motto: The best for the world, the rest for God. They do not seem to suspect that they are insulting God by such conduct, or if they do, they seem to consider it a matter of very little importance. Yet every time that men insult our Savior by harboring such despicable sentiments, He feels anew the pain that He felt when the Jews cried out: "Away with Him. Give us Barabbas."

In the gospel narrative we read of the obdurate Jews: "They could not believe" (Jn. 12:39). Why could they not believe? Because of their worldly spirit, their inordinate desire for wealth, honor, and pleasure. Wealth in itself is no obstacle to salvation, but inordinate attachment to wealth to the point of slavery or the service of Mammon is. To a man who devotes all his time and energy to the acquisition of wealth, heavenly treasures seem worthless, because they cannot be deposited in a bank and interest drawn on them. Our Lord, on one occasion, reminded His listeners that they were merely the stewards appointed by God of these earthly treasures, and warned them that if they did not use them to gain friends in heaven, and proved untrustworthy in their stewardship, God would certainly withhold from them greater spiritual treasures. The Pharisees began to ridicule Him for this. Why? Because they were covetous, the Evangelist tells us. But Jesus said to them: "You justify yourself before men, but God sees your heart, and what He sees there is an abomination to Him" (cf. Lk. 16:9 ff.). Whatever is an abomination to the Lord is grief to the heart of Jesus, who came into the world to transform men from objects of loathing to God into objects of the divine good pleasure.

Christ assigns yet another reason why so many Jews failed to accept Him and His doctrine. He said: "I know you, that you have not the love of God in you. You seek only to be honored by men; whether you are also deserving of honor from God, concerns you not" (cf. Jn. 5:42-44). God had determined to exalt this people above all peoples in the kingdom of time, divine glory, and now He finds that they desire nothing but the worthless plaudits of men. Thus God's designs were frustrated. The leaders of the people and with them the great masses of the people were entirely engrossed in worldly pursuits and ambitions: they were satisfied with a purely external worship of God, and prided themselves on their descent from Abraham, as though this in itself were sufficient to insure for them all the treasures of the Messianic kingdom which was to come. Our Savior calls them "blind, and leaders of the blind" (Mt. 15:14). This is the reason why this blind nation with its blind leaders plunged into the abyss of unbelief and of the judgment of God; it was a consequence of their worldliness. What great grief this caused the heart of our Savior!

2. *Our Savior has told us forcefully what He thinks of love of the world.* "But woe to you rich! for you are now having your comfort. Woe to you who are filled! for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now! for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you! In the selfsame manner their fathers used to treat the prophets" (Lk. 6:24-26). This fourfold woe is hurled against those who seek to satisfy the hunger of their souls for happiness with earthly possessions, pleasures, and honors, and thus stifle in their souls all desire for divine, eternal treasures. "A rich man shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven," our Savior said, when the rich young man departed from Him sorrowfully, because he did not have the moral strength to accept the loving invitation of our Lord to distribute his wealth among the poor and in poverty follow the poor Savior (cf. Mt. 19:21 ff.). What would have become of this young man had he followed the divine call? Probably we should honor him today as a saint. But the unfortunate youth sacrificed such signal honor and the heavenly treasure promised him by our Lord, because he was a slave of wealth and was unable to break the chains which bound him to this service.

Such worldliness was also the reason why the greater portion of the Jewish nation was excluded from the heavenly banquet while the heathens, and more especially those among them of the poorer classes, as St. Paul tells us (cf. Cor. 1:26 ff.), came in crowds and sat down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt. 8:11). Our Lord describes this for us in the parable of the great supper which a rich man prepared and to which he had invited many. The rich man is God, the supper is the kingdom of heaven (cf. Lk. 14:15, 16), and the invitation to the banquet was proffered by all the prophets down to John the Baptist (cf. Mt. 11:13). Then the kingdom of heaven itself came with the coming of Jesus Christ and

this kingdom will be consummated in the heavenly banquet. The apostles and disciples were sent to tell the Jews, who had already been invited, that the kingdom of God was at hand (cf. Mt. 10:6; Lk. 10:9). But those invited declared that they had other concerns and could spare no time for the kingdom of God. What were these other interests? One had acquired property and had to inspect it. Another was engrossed in his work; he had bought oxen and wished to try them. A third declared briefly, "I have married and hence cannot come" (Lk. 14:18 ff.). These three excuses all meant substantially: "we have our satisfaction in earthly treasure and no desire for the heavenly banquet." This is the attitude of the children of this world. But there are many who are poor and miserable and therefore not attached to earthly pleasures. These the rich man summoned from the streets and lanes of the city, from the highways and hedges of the country, and they came full of joy and filled his house (cf. Lk. 14:21 ff.).

But we must not draw the conclusion that all the rich are excluded. Our Savior found friends also in their ranks. We need but recall Matthew, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, the families of Lazarus and of Zacchaeus. For wealth itself is not opposed to Christ, but only slavery to it. A wealthy man who is not a slave of his wealth can easily become a friend of God. Thus we read: "A certain rich man of Arimathea, Joseph by name, who also himself was a disciple of Jesus" (Mt. 25:57). He was "a good and just man... who likewise was looking for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 23:50, 51). On the other hand, there are also poor people of whom it is written that they have not and covet; they envy others for the things they themselves cannot obtain (cf. Jas. 4:2). Hence, anyone who gives his heart to the world, whether he be rich or poor, cannot give his heart to our Savior; and anyone who desires to give it to Him, must first strip himself of all love of the world. We cannot serve two masters. Slaves of the world are not the friends of Christ. St. James tells us: "Adulterers, do you not know that the friendship of this world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of this world, becomes an enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4). He calls apostasy from God, with consequent devotion to the world, adultery. This is also the language of the prophets (for example, Ps. 72:27), and of Christ, who calls the Jewish nation of His day "an evil and adulterous generation" (Mt. 12:39), which denies God by its works and as a child of the devil does the devil's (cf. Jn. 8:44, 55). Years ago they had been possessed by an evil spirit, the devil of idolatry. He was exorcised in the Babylonian captivity. But in his place seven other evil spirits worse than the first took possession of them, so that they rejected their Messiah and put Him to death, and eventually reached such a pitch of insane frenzy' that shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans they even began to murder one another. What a terrible punishment — but what a just one — for their apostasy from God and from Christ and for their thoroughly worldly spirit. Christ had foretold that in the case of this wicked generation the last tilings, namely before the repression of the Jewish revolt by Rome, would be worse than the first had been, before the nation was led captive to Babylon (cf. Mt. 12:45).

3. *The grief of the heart of Christ at the worldly spirit of His people* was so great that it forced tears to His (cf. Lk. 19:41). For worldliness is an evil which opposes an insurmountable obstacle to His desire to bring salvation to the world. Our Savior desires the hearts of men, the love of men. Hence He warns us: "Do not store up for yourselves corruptible treasures which may be destroyed or stolen, but rather by your good deeds lay up to yourselves incorruptible treasures in heaven." And why is this so important? "For where thy treasure is, there thy heart also will be" (Mt. 6:21). A heart which seeks all its joy in the treasures of earth finds no consolation in God and feels no desire to possess Him. Heaven is the portion only of those who seek it, who strenuously strive to attain it (cf. Mt. 7:13, 14). But this is impossible for a heart filled with love of the world, for no man can go in opposite directions at one and the same time. As

long as we do not subordinate creatures to our last end but seek them for their own sake, they are a leaden weight which keeps us on the earth and prevents our rising above it.

This is the reason why our Savior exhorts us: "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its justice and all that you need of earthly goods shall be added unto you" (cf. Mt. 6:33). By the word "first" our Savior here designates not the order of time but that of importance. He says in effect: "The kingdom of heaven must be your first, your highest aim, and you must subordinate all else to this. You must not have another end beside this, but must consider and use all else only as a means to this end." Let us abstract now from those who have no faith and do not care to get to heaven, and consider only the aims and actions of those who would gladly after death share in eternal beatitude. Do not most of them lead lives which are ordered as if Christ had said: "Seek ye first the treasures and pleasures of the world; and the kingdom of heaven will be added unto you"?

But they will be disillusioned as the rich man in the Gospel was disillusioned. This man clothed himself in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day, foolishly convinced that since he was a descendant of Abraham he would surely share the kingdom of heaven. What must have been his thoughts when he found that he had not been called from the pleasures of life to the joys of heaven, but had been consigned to the flames of hell? He pleaded piteously with his father Abraham. But the answer was: "Son, remember that you received good things in your lifetime; now only torment remains for you" (cf. Lk. 16:19 ff.). This man is not accused of any grave crimes; he merely neglected to strive after heaven by the exercise of justice, that is by doing good deeds. His guilt consisted in the fact that he knew no other use for his wealth than to spend it for his own comfort and pleasure. His punishment was eternal torment in hell. This is natural consequence of that love of earth which would gladly renounce all claim to the possession of God if only this material, pleasurable life were eternal.

Every Christian worthy of the name is, of course, prepared to give up material goods insofar as they are incompatible with the love of God. But to purify our hearts from all earthly desires to such an extent that no desire or deed influenced by inordinate love of self is difficult indeed. This is a state toward which we must ceaselessly tend, but which we shall attain only gradually. The devotion to the Sacred Heart is an excellent means to this end. This we learn from the life of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. She admits that all earthly things had become matters of indifference to her since the day that she began to cultivate the devotion to the Sacred Heart and to make the desires of this heart the guiding principles and the motive force of her life. Since we know how much grief love of the world caused and still causes the Sacred Heart, we should not deserve the name of friends of Jesus if we did not strive earnestly to combat this enemy of His, at least in our own hearts.

CHAPTER XXI

Grief of the Heart of Jesus at the Hatred of the World

*"Know that the world hath hated
Me before you" (cf. Jn. 15:18).*

1. *Our divine Savior was really hated.* This is in itself incredible, for there never was a man who was more deserving of love than He. From the first days of His public ministry, His whole life was spent in ceaseless effort to alleviate and eliminate the physical and moral necessities of His people. He Himself characterizes His ministrations with the words: "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise, the poor have the Gospel preached to them" (Mt. 11:5). Hence He asks the Jews with perfect justice: "I have done many and great works before your eyes in the name and at the command of My heavenly Father; for which of these works do you hate Me?" (Cf. Jn. 10:32.)

It happens very often that people bitterly hate those to whom they owe gratitude and love when these benefactors and friends oppose their unbridled passions. Thus it was with the Jews and our Savior. St. Augustine enumerates the benefactions of Christ to the Jews and then continues: "It is true He was not a silent witness of their vices, but rebuked them to awaken in them displeasure for their sins, not displeasure for Himself, the Physician who was to cure them. But they, as though demented by a violent fever, stormed at the Physician who had come to help them and devised ways and means to put Him to death." [footnote: St. Augustine, *In Ps. lxxiii*, 3.] It is horrifying: God became man for love of men, and men returned His love with a hate which could only be sated with the blood of the murdered God-man. "Away with Him," they screamed; "crucify Him. His blood be on us and on our children" (Jn. 19:15; Mt. 27:25). That was hate even to madness. Our Savior calls it the fulfillment of a prophecy (cf. Ps. 68:5). "They hated Me without cause" (Jn. 15:25). Impelled by diabolic forces, they hated their Benefactor, their Messiah, their God. What were all the physical pains which our Savior endured when compared with the grief which filled His soul at the horrifying ingratitude of His own well-loved people? He prays to His heavenly Father: "The troubles of My heart are multiplied. . . . Consider My enemies, for they are multiplied and have hated Me with an unjust hatred" (Ps. 24:17-19).

The hatred of the Jews for Jesus began even before Jesus had chosen His apostles; for St. Luke, speaking of the Scribes and Pharisees, says that "they were filled with fury; and began to discuss among themselves, what they should do to Jesus" (Lk. 6:11); then only he narrates the choosing of the twelve. St. Mark observes the same order (cf. 3:6. 13 ff.). From that time on their hatred grew until the time when Caiphas declared to the chief priests and Pharisees gathered in council: "Nor do you reflect that it is expedient for us that one man die for the people, instead of the whole nation perishing. So from that day forth their plan was to put Him to death" (Jn. 11:50-53).

They tried to cloak their hatred by trumping up two charges: first, that Jesus was a blasphemer and desecrator of the Sabbath; second, that He stirred up the people and this imperiled the nation. The object of the first charge was to bring Jesus into disrepute with the Jews, who were exact observers of the law. The second was intended to make Him suspect with the Roman authorities. The accusation of blasphemy was too senseless to be productive of anything like success. But with the accusation that Christ was an agitator they hoped to impress Pilate. When, however, Pilate had examined the cause of Christ, he declared that Jesus was innocent (cf. Lk. 3:4; Jn. 18:38). As a matter of fact, Christ had preached obedience to authority. The Jewish zealots, on the other hand, were constantly planning how they might free themselves from the yoke of Rome. A few decades after the death of Christ the whole nation was in revolt. They were guilty of the very crime of which they had falsely accused Jesus and for their deicide were overtaken by the just punishment of God.

But the real motive for their hatred of the Savior was very different. The leaders of the people saw that their hypocrisy had been discovered, their false principles condemned, and that, consequently, their position of honor and power was imperiled. They were not to amass wealth as they had been doing, but to practice contempt of the world; not to seek honors, but to practice humility; not to be greedy for power, but to exercise an active charity; not to be satisfied with a vain display of external works of piety, but to render God true, inward service. Their dream of a great, politically powerful Messianic kingdom, in which the first places were reserved for them, was to be discarded, and in its stead they were to be satisfied with a kingdom of truth and justice. Such ideas were diametrically opposed to their thoroughly worldly spirit and so their hatred of our Savior only grew when they saw how the people followed Him.

Our Lord designated all His enemies by the term, "The world." "But (the world) hates Me because I bear witness concerning it, that its works are evil" (Jn. 7:7). He battled with this world and was apparently worsted in the fray: but in reality He carried off the victory. "Take courage, I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). Such was the hatred of the world for its Savior, hatred even to bloody combat and death; this was its reward toward Him whose heart was enkindled with love and consumed with the desire to save it.

2. *The world continues to hate our Savior* as He predicted that it would. In His farewell address to His apostles before the passion, He said: "If you were of the world, the world would love what is its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. . . . No servant is greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you . . . yes, the hour is coming, for everyone who kills you also thinks that he is offering worship to God. . . . But these things I have spoken to you, that when the time for them has come, you may remember that I told you" (Jn. 15:19, 20; 16:2-4). St. John the Evangelist, who has recorded these parting discourses of our Savior for us, understood by the world the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life (cf. 1 Jn. 2:16). This world, which numbered among its followers Jews and Gentiles alike, was, and is by its very nature, an enemy of Christ, who taught selfdenial, poverty, and humility. Opposition is inevitable.

The Synagogue began the conflict. No sooner had several thousand Jews been converted to Christianity after the descent of the Holy Ghost (cf. Acts 2:41; 4:4), than the Jewish magistrates with threats forbade the apostles to preach in the name of Jesus (cf. Acts 4:1). Since this admonition had no effect, they again arrested the apostles and had them scourged (cf. Acts 5:40). A little later the nascent Church obtained her first martyr. For when Stephen unafraid gave testimony of Christ before the council, they, crying out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and with one accord ran violently upon him and casting him out of the city they stoned him (cf. Acts ff.). Later still Herod Agrippa sacrificed the apostle James, the brother of John, to the hatred of the Jews (cf. Acts 12:2). As the persecution increased in violence, the Christians dispersed over all Judea, Samaria, and the pagan world. In this way the Gospel was spread to new countries (cf. Acts 8:1-4; 11:19 ff.). Nevertheless, the messengers of the Gospel, even in pagan lands, were wont first to address the dispersed Jews. But here they had the same experiences as at Jerusalem. The vast majority only anger and hatred for the glad tidings of the Gospel. For instance, in Thessalonica the Jews caused an uprising because St. Paul and Silas had, so they said, proclaimed Christ king in opposition to the emperor (cf. Acts 17:5 ff.). Again at Corinth, when St. Paul proclaimed Christ as the Messiah, they contradicted and blasphemed to such an extent that St. Paul said to them: "Your blood be upon your own heads . . . henceforth I will go to the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6). Similar incidents occurred in other places (cf. Acts 13:45; 14:2; 19:9; 23:20 ff; 24:19). The Jewish nation which had been predestined to be the chosen people of the New Dispensation, persevered for the most part in their hatred of Christ and

His work so that our Savior in the depth of His sorrow could truly say: "Instead of making Me a return of love, they detract Me; they repay Me evil for good and hatred for My love" (cf. Ps. 108:4, 5).

And what of the Gentiles? Many of them, indeed, even during the lifetime of the apostles, accepted the faith, and the Church soon became an organization in which converts from paganism predominated. But it was not long before the pagan world arose with all its power against Christ and vented its hatred in ten bloody persecutions. That these persecutions were motivated by hatred of the Christian religion is evident from the wording of the condemnations which have come down to us. Thus, in the year 180, the proconsul Saturninus condemned a number of Christians in the following terms: "Speratus . . . and the rest who admit that they live after the manner of Christians and who stubbornly refuse to avail themselves of the permission to return to a pagan mode of life will die by the sword." Even the emperor Trajan at the beginning of the second century had already decreed that all those who were accused of being Christians and were convicted should be punished. Tertullian wrote: "A confession of Christianity is sufficient for the hatred of the pagans, no other crime is required. The judgment simply reads: 'You Christians may not live.'" [footnote: Tertull., Apologet. 2, 3; 4, 4.] When the emperor Galerius suspended the persecution in 311, he stated in his decree: "We permit that Christians may again live." Often the accused were offered liberty on condition that they deny Christ. In view of these facts, there can be no doubt at all that the aim of these persecutions, which lasted for three hundred years, was to dethrone Christ and to destroy His kingdom.

In heathen lands such persecutions of Christ have continued even to our own day as we learn from the reports of the missionaries. Christ foresaw and suffered in anticipation all the pains of the martyrs, all the rivers of blood which these witnesses of the faith shed. He saw, moreover, the intensity of the hatred with which His enemies in once Christian lands, even in our day, persecute the Church and seek to destroy her. How many thousands of His people have died in the past two decades through Communist hatred of God and of all who stand with Him? And this hatred caused Him as much pain as though it were directed against Himself personally. He who persecutes the Church persecutes Christ. When the first persecutions began, the Christians at Jerusalem prayed: "Lord, Thou didst make heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are in them. Thou, by the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of our father David, Thy servant, hast said: 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the people meditate vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes assembled together against the Lord and His Christ.' For of a truth there assembled together in this city against the Holy Son, Jesus, whom thou hast anointed. Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel" (cf. Acts 4:24 ff.).

Persecution of the Church, then, is persecution of Christ. Christ Himself has given testimony to this effect. For when Saul breathing out threatenings and slaughter was bound for Damascus to persecute the Christians there, he was cast to the ground by the power of God and heard a voice which said: "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute Me?", But he said: "Who art Thou, Lord?" And the voice answered: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutes!" (Acts 9:4, 5). Let us not forget that Christ suffers in the persecution of His Church, suffers in each individual Christian who is persecuted because of his faith. Whenever a member is lost to the Church because of ridicule, threats, or physical violence, it is torn from the mystical body of Christ, causing Him unspeakable pain. Let us recall how dear to His heart innocent children were. And shall such little ones be torn away from Christ in godless schools through lies and deception? Can we witness this spectacle with a mere shrug of the shoulders and remain inactive? If we possess but a spark of love for our Savior, our hearts will suggest what we can do for this sacred cause of our Savior by prayer, sacrifice, and a fearless defense of our Catholic convictions.

3. *But Christ, today as of old, is not only hated and persecuted in His mystical body, but also in person.* Christ dwells behind the tabernacle door in the Most Blessed Sacrament body and soul. His love has imprisoned Him there. His love keeps Him there, His love has delivered Him into the power of men. And what use have men made of this power? Let us speak only of heretics. They refuse to believe the explicit words of Christ and deny that He is physically present. This is bad enough. But they are not satisfied with mere demals. The insults which have been heaped upon the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and more especially on the Mass since the Reformation in the sixteenth century, would be incredible if it were not for incontestable evidence. Popish abomination, idolatry', devil-worship, are terms which are not obsolete even today. And words led to corresponding deeds. Tabernacles were broken open, the sacred hosts derided and subjected to the basest desecration. Churches were robbed and destroyed. In France five hundred small and fifty large churches were razed by the Huguenots. Even in the little country of Flanders, about four hundred churches and thousands of altars were destroyed in one week of the year 1566. The outrages perpetrated in the Peasants' war and by the Iconoclasts are recorded in history as a proof of the extent of mad fury to which the powers of darkness can go ad men against all that is holy.

In other places where the churches were spared, our Savior was banished from them, and they now sorrow in their cold desertion for the heavenly Guest whom they once harbored. They sorrow the more, for they must often be silent witnesses of the degradation to which the best that their walls ever inclosed is subjected.

At the last supper when our Savior instituted the Sacrament of His body and blood. He foresaw all these profanations. Nevertheless, His love was not deterred from working this greatest of miracles. Yet the foreknowledge of such ingratitude hurt Him deeply. His consolation was the knowledge that so many millions of souls would exert themselves to make reparation for all this hate and all these offenses.

His gaze at that time rested also upon us. God grant that it was a look of pleasure. The world hates our Savior; let us love Him the more faithfully and fervently. The world despises our Savior; let us honor Him the more diligently. The world seeks to banish our Savior; let us prepare our hearts so that He may always find there a refuge where He may dwell with pleasure. The world wages war against Christ; let us fight for Him and sacrifice ourselves and all that is ours courageously to promote the victory of His cause. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament should be the center of our lives, of our love, of our thoughts and desires. All for Jesus!

CHAPTER XXII

Grief of the Heart of Jesus at the Dishonor of God

*"They have hated both Me and
My Father" (cf. Jn. 15:24).*

1. *The highest aim of our divine Savior is the honor of His heavenly Father.* Every conspicuously great man has also one great ambition to which he devotes all his energies. The greatest of all men who have ever lived or will yet live is our Lord, Jesus Christ. It follows, therefore, that He proposed to Himself the greatest conceivable purpose. We know His life's work. It was to redeem the men of all times from sin, ignorance, and eternal misery; to lead them back to truth, justice, and happiness. But the salvation of the world is not the loftiest aim possible. There is a higher one, namely, to procure the glory of God, that is, to bring men to adore, reverence, and love God chiefly by the obedient observance of His commandments.

Christ Himself has designated the glory of God as the supreme purpose of His life. At His very entrance into the world, He said: "Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:9). Perfect conformity to the will of God even to the extent of laying down His life was the guiding principle of all His thoughts and deeds. "He who sent Me, the Father, has given Me commandment what I should say, and what I should declare. . . The things, therefore, that I speak, I speak as the Father has bidden Me" (Jn. 12:49, 50). "I have come... not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (Jn. 6:38). "I freely lay down My life. This commandment I have received from My Father" (cf. Jn. 10:17, 18). Our Savior makes similar statements again and again. Even at the last supper, He said: "But . . . that the world may know, that I love the Father, and that I do as the Father has commanded Me" (Jn. 14:31).

When His soul was troubled to its depths at the thought of His impending sufferings, He prayed: "Father, glorify Thy name"; because "for this cause I came unto this hour" (Jn. 12:28, 27). The single thought that this concerns the honor of the heavenly Father, was sufficient to calm the troubled waters of fear which surged over His Sacred Heart. Even in the Garden of Olives, when the death agony had bowed Him to the earth and was forcing His blood through the pores of His body in the sweat of blood, the one cry that escaped His lips was: "Father... not My will, but Thine be done" (Lk. 22:41 ff).

At the end of His life He could, therefore, address His heavenly Father and say in all truth: "I have glorified Thee on earth; I have accomplished the work that Thou hast given Me to do" (Jn. 17:4). On the cross He said: "It is consummated." Then He bowed His head and died (cf. Jn. 19:30). Having worked and suffered so tirelessly for His heavenly Father, He bowed His head as though to rest it on the bosom of God.

It is true that the Father glorified His Son as a reward for His efforts, His suffering and death. He "hath exalted Him and hath bestowed upon Him the name that is above every name; so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9 ff.). This glory, too, is utilized by our Savior to glorify His Father in turn. "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee" (Jn. 17:1). The Father glorifies the Son by making Him the glorious head of the kingdom of God, the Church. The Son glorifies the Father through the Church which lives in and by His spirit and which exercises uninterrupted praise of God in her teaching, in the dispensation of her sacraments, in her divine worship. Her praise of God will never cease while time endures. Finally the end of the world will come and the Son, to whom the Father has subjected all things, will, in turn, subject Himself and His triumphant Church to the Father, and with His followers will have no other occupation than to offer to God the eternal sacrifice of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving. Then God will be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28).

Subjection to God is predicated of the humanity of Christ, for it, too, is a creature. Every rational creature is created to know, love, and honor God; hence, also the human nature of Christ. But never has any creature grasped as perfectly as the soul of Christ the full meaning of this highest end, its necessity, its conformity with rational nature, its excellence, and unconditioned desirability. Therefore, no creature ever tended so perfectly toward this end as did the soul of Christ or so inexorably made it the guiding principle

of the whole of life and of each individual act. There never was a more zealous promoter of God's glory; never one to equal Him. The heart of Jesus is a sacrificial altar on which the most perfect sacrifice of adoration is continually offered to God, a sacrifice which is pleasing to God above all other sacrifices.

2. *The heart of Jesus, enkindled with zeal for the honor of God, keenly feels the dishonor that is offered to God.* How could it be otherwise? Every dutiful child feels deeply the insults and injuries to which his parents are subjected. But the love of a child for its parents is small and insignificant when compared with the love of the heavenly Father which burns in the heart of Jesus. Only if we could understand the greatness of His love, would we be able to fathom the depth of sorrow which the offenses against God cause Jesus. Since this is impossible, we must content ourselves with the confession that this sorrow surpasses our comprehension. Yet our Savior would gladly suffer still more if by His suffering He could prevent the offenses men commit against God.

Jesus, who has predicated of Himself meekness of heart (cf. Mt. 11:29), seems in His zeal to put meekness aside when there is question of God's glory. He manifested this characteristic at the very beginning of His public life, when He saw the temple at Jerusalem desecrated by the greedy merchants. A holy anger seized Him. He made a scourge out of cords and drove the tradesmen with their wares out of the temple, saying: "Do not make the house of My Father a house of business" (Jn. 2:14 ff.). The Evangelist adds: "His disciples remembered, that it was written: 'The zeal of Thy house has eaten Me up'" (Jn. 2:17). The quotation here is from the sixty-eighth Psalm which refers to the Messiah. There we read: "Because for Thy sake I have borne reproach, shame hath covered up My face. For the zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up: and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me" (Ps. 68:8-10). Burning with zeal for the glory of God, the heart of our Savior is consumed at the spectacle of such profanation of the sanctuary of God; it feels these profanations more keenly than the insults God's enemies direct against His own person.

If the grief of the heart of Christ was so great at the sight of the desecration of the material temple at Jerusalem, we can easily judge how much greater it must be at the violation of the spiritual temple, the soul, by mortal sin. Here the world penetrates the sanctuary not with objects which are as innocent in themselves as the barter of sheep and oxen, but with all the moral perversity of the devil himself. The Jews did not drive the Lord out of their temple, but mortal sin banishes Him from the soul. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwells in you? If any one destroys the temple of God, him will God destroy" (1 Cor. 3:16, 17). It was Christ's intention to make the hearts of men once more temples of God (cf. Jn. 14:23); sin transforms them into abodes of the devil, "for what participation hath justice with injustice? Or fellowship hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14.) Grace, virtue, merit, the beauties of the soul, in fine, all the treasures which Christ merited for us at the expenditure of so much energy and at the cost of His life's blood — all are destroyed. The kingdom of God, which Christ came to announce and establish, is destroyed in the soul, and Satan is enthroned once more in the heart from which Christ had banished him.

To serve God by doing His will most perfectly was the sum and substance of Christ's life on earth, the one desire of His heart. The sinner, on the other hand, in the act of sin comes before His God and says in effect: "I will not serve" (Jer. 2:20). To lead men by the path of the observance of the commandments of heaven, where they will eternally praise God, was and is His most cherished plan. Sin leads men to hell, where they blaspheme God forever. Mortal sin, then, is diametrically opposed to the plan Christ strove to realize. It is altogether impossible, therefore, that rebellion against God should not cause Him great pain.

3. *What are the sentiments of the heart of Jesus as He contemplates the Christian world?* As He looks upon those members of His kingdom who have been consecrated by baptism to procure the glory of God, does He see His life's ambition realized, and gaze upon a great family of God's children who are exceedingly dear to God and live only for His glory? Would that this were so! Each Christian ought to be another Christ. God's gaze ought to rest with pleasure on Christian communities. What He had once said of His only-begotten Son, He should be able to say of His adopted children: "These are My beloved children, in whom I am well pleased."

God is pleased with all those who are in the state of sanctifying grace, and His pleasure grows in proportion as they advance in grace by the conscientious fulfillment of all their obligations and by the frequent reception of the sacraments. Are all those who have been baptized in the state of sanctifying grace? We are unable to see the souls of men. But our Savior sees them. This is why He has instituted the sacrament of penances for He foresaw its necessity. He knew also that even those who had been baptized would again deliberately return to that awful condition from which He had rescued them at the cost of so much labor and such great sacrifices. We read in the first chapter of the fourteenth session of the Council of Trent: "If those regenerated possessed such gratitude toward God that they would faithfully guard the justice they received by His grace and liberality' in the sacrament of baptism, there would have been no need of another sacrament different from baptism for the remission of sin." [footnote: Sess. 14, C. 1.]

Hence, it is certain that not all Christians preserve their baptismal innocence. In the early ages of the Church, those who had committed especially grave and public sins were compelled to do public penance. During the divine service they stood in a place especially reserved for them so that St. Augustine, in the course of one of his sermons, could point to them and say: "The penitents whom you see there have committed grave sins." [footnote: St. Augustine, *De Symbolo ad Catech.* C. 7.] If we should now divide all Christians into two groups, as they will be divided at the last judgment, with those who possess sanctifying grace standing on the right side, and all the sinners on the left — on which side would we find the greater number? That is God's secret. Our Savior has said: "Wide is the gate, and broad the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who enter that way" (Mt. 7:13). There are Christians who speak frankly of their sins as though they were of little importance or even boast of them and try to bring others to their mode of life; many more there are who make no attempt to disguise their sinful lives; and many more still who, though addicted to sin in secret, still strive to pass as good Christians. The devil can point to all these in mockery and say to Christ: "Behold, here are those for whom You shed Your blood and whom You made children of God by baptism that they might constitute the assemblage of the true worshipers of God and honor Him by their thoughts, words, and deeds; surely You cannot be proud of these disciples of Yours." Cannot the devil use such mocking language in all justice? As a matter of fact, is he not infernally pleased at the morals of so many Christians? And is there not a corresponding sorrow in the heart of our Savior, who sees the honor of His heavenly Father trodden underfoot by the conduct of so many Christians?

In these latter days many have begun to show openly sentiments which formerly were carefully hidden in the depths of the heart. Within the past three or four decades very many who had posed as Christians have thrown off the mask and exposed externally all the corruption that dwelt within their hearts. Two vices in particular, covetousness and inordinate love of pleasure, have manifested themselves without restraint in startling ways. The essence of all wisdom for thousands has become: overreach, cheat, steal, rob, make money in any and every way possible. And though the people are suffering want, children

perishing for lack of good food, and nations are bleeding from a thousand wounds inflicted by war, these reckless spirits carouse, dance, rejoice, and tear down all the barriers of propriety and morality.

Our Savior still dwells in many churches despite the godlessness which everywhere surrounds Him. Will our coldness and indifference cause Him to depart from us entirely and leave us to the misery of our own choosing? Not that, O Lord, not that! We will offer reparation to the best of our ability, we will fight and suffer for Thy honor, faithful until death, be the cost what it may.

Let us take to heart the words of a great saint, a gifted, noble, and courageous woman. St. Teresa: "Christians, it is high time for you to defend your King and gather about Him in His great abandonment. For small is the number of the faithful which still surround Him, while the number of those who follow Lucifer is great. . . . O (Jesus Christ) Thou true friend, how shamefully those reward Thee who betray Thee! O true Christians, weep with your God!" St. Teresa, pray for us that we may weep with our God as thou hast wept, and also exert ourselves to the full measure of our ability as thou hast done in order to bring victory' again to the cause of God.

CHAPTER XXIII

Grief of the Heart of Jesus at the Obduracy of Sinners

"You shall die in your sin" (Jn. 8:21).

1. *Impenitence is the beginning of eternal damnation*, is of faith that no one is converted in hell; if this were not true, the punishment of hell would not be eternal as the Church has defined. In this life, on the other hand, repentance is possible, with the help of grace, for every man who enjoys the use of reason no matter how numerous or heinous his sins may be. Nevertheless, it is true that there are individuals who, in a sense, are even here below in the condition of the eternally damned. They are those who persevere stubbornly in sin and have no desire to be converted. To be hardened in sin means to refuse to do penance.

Our Savior spoke of a sin against the Holy Ghost which cannot be forgiven either in this world or in the next (cf. Mt. 12:32). This sin is final impenitence whereby man lives and dies in sin. God can, of course, in virtue of His omnipotence convert any sinner; but He forces no man, and if a man does not wish to be converted, God does not coerce him. St. Augustine says of such a man: "Even when God urges him to penance, he merely heaps up anger in his hardness of heart and his impenitence against the day of anger and of the revelation of the just judgments of God... Such impenitence is not pardoned either in this life or the next." [footnote: St. Augustine, *Sermon* 71. C. 12, n. 20.]

Examples of such malice are recorded in Holy Scripture. The language of the godless is given in the second book of Wisdom: Our life is short; what is to follow after this life, no man knows. Let us, therefore, use well the short time allotted us. Let us carouse, and drink, and be happy, and leave everywhere the traces of our rioting; let us oppress the weak, and exploit them, and persecute the just with ridicule and

violence, nor hesitate even to murder them. This is the substance of that chapter. The Holy Ghost condemns such men in the following words: "These things they thought and were deceived, for their own malice blinded them. And they follow him [the devil] that are of his side" (Wisd. 2:21. 25).

In the New Testament we find such obduracy in evil-doing in those opponents of our Lord who would not admit His divine mission at any cost, and when they could not deny His miracles, boldly declared that He performed them not in the name of God, but by the power of Beelzebub (cf. Mt. 12:24). It was on this occasion that our Lord reminded them that there was a sin against the Holy Ghost which could not be forgiven. The Evangelist writes: "That is why they could not believe, because Isaias said again: 'He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; lest they should see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them'" (Jn. 12:39, 40). The fault was not God's but their own as St. Paul tells us: "Did God perhaps not cause the truth to be preached to them? Or did they not understand the sermons? The sermons were distinct and intelligible": but God said to Israel: "All the day long I stretched out My hand to a people unbelieving and contradicting" (cf. Rom. 10:17-21). Hence the condemnation of our Savior: "In your sin you will die" (Jn. 8:21) and be lost for ever: you have preferred in life to serve the devil rather than God: for this reason you were unable to accept My doctrine (cf. Jn. 8:43, 44, 47); you will receive the reward for your obduracy with the devil in hell.

We need not go far to find similar turning away from the divine Light and resistance to the moral law in our own day. Unabashed, men declare faith in God and in the Christian revelation to be creations of the human brain, and maintain that the destruction of all religion is necessary for human happiness. Belief in an Incarnate God who will come again to judge the living and the dead, belief in heaven and hell is calculated to disturb men in the peaceful enjoyment of material blessings; hence, this delusion must be eliminated. The ten commandments are plebeian prejudices, sin is a word without meaning. The other logical consequences of such doctrines need not be imagined; they are being worked out right around us. The proponents of such tenets have advanced far beyond the pernicious doctrines of even the obdurate Pharisees of our Lord's day.

Any man who accepts such principles, by that very fact destroys the possibility of again opening his eyes to the light, and of making his heart once more susceptible to the promptings of grace. Such willful blindness of intellect and deliberate perversion of the will is precisely the condition of the devils in hell and of their human companions. The obduracy of the wicked during life is the inception in time of a condition which will become permanent in hell. We may hope, of course, that some of those who are loudest in their outcry against God, revelation, religion, the moral law, and the Church, are simply trying to drown the voice of conscience which has not ceased to reproach them. As long as this voice continues to upbraid them, there is hope that they may return to reason and faith. Unfortunately, however, too many succeed in completely drugging conscience by their constant opposition to all its dictates. And once this has happened there is interior peace — the *peace of death*, from which these unfortunates will only be roused in hell. They would not listen to the voice of God, therefore He lets them go according to the desires of their heart (cf. Ps. 80:12, 13). This is the most terrible punishment which God inflicts on man in this life.

2. *The obduracy of so many men is a source of great grief to the heart of our Savior.* When our Savior underwent His terrible anguish of soul in the Garden of Olives, the thought that so many would die in their sins and would remain His enemies for all eternity was one of the most potent causes of His agony and bloody sweat. It is true that every sin lay heavily on His soul, and that His bitter suffering and death was an unutterably painful satisfaction for each. But when He saw men who after a long and sinful life were, nevertheless, converted and saved, His grief was changed to joy. For He had come "to seek and to

save what was lost" (Lk. 19:10); and He accomplishes this, His heart's desire, in all those who die in His grace. If there is joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance (cf. Lk. 15:10), where will this joy be greater than in the heart of Jesus, who has made such sacrifice to save the souls of sinners?

But commensurate with the greatness of His joy at the happy death of a converted sinner is the greatness of His sorrow at the unhappy death of one who dies impenitent. Our Savior loved him no less than the other; He became man for him, suffered the agonies of death for him in the Garden of Olives; died for him on Calvary after enduring bitter pain. Perhaps He had even made him a child of God through baptism, come to him frequently in Holy Communion, heard from his lips, hundreds or even thousands of times, the vow of eternal fidelity and rewarded it with the tenderest manifestations of His love. And now, despite all these benefactions, the end of all this is hell.

Our Savior sees all those who will one day die in their sins; He sees the whole journey from the first sin to the horrible fall into eternal misery. In order to form some idea of the grief of the heart of Jesus at the loss of such souls, let us consider a human parallel. Let us take a mother who has frequently warned her little son not to walk along a certain path because it is very dangerous. One day she sees that the thoughtless child has violated her command. She sees him all unconscious of the danger, walking on the forbidden path to a point whence he must inevitably fall over a precipice and be crushed. She calls out to him and commands him to stand still until she can reach him. But the child merely laughs and begins to dance and gambol in his newly found freedom. Then suddenly a scream and the child disappears into the depth before the eyes of its mother. Would not the grief of that mother almost drive her to insanity? But the love our Savior entertains for each soul is far greater than the love of even the best of mothers for her only child. Yet He sees how thousands are wandering along forbidden ways, paying no heed to His admonitions to stop and turn back; He sees how they stumble on with laughter on their lips and fall into the abyss of hell, lose life everlasting and not merely temporal life. He hears their shriek of despair followed by blasphemies and imprecations which will not cease for all eternity. Then He can repeat those words which He had once uttered by the mouth of the prophet: "I desired not your death, but that you be converted and live. Why would you die?" (Cf. Ezech. 18:31. 32.)

This long, sad procession with its frightful end is always present to our Savior. Day after day, hour after hour it passes before Him, a procession of joy and jubilation or of anger and rage; but from the vanguard of this procession, always the same gruesome screams of despair reach His ear. We would all be overcome with horror and rendered incapable of enjoying again a single happy moment if we saw even once this staggering tragedy in all its awfulness. But whether we see it or not, it is continually enacted and will be to the end of the world, and the loving heart of our Savior must endure this painful spectacle. In the light of this fact the Garden of Olives where the most valiant hero of earth endured sorrow, fear, loathing, extreme weakness, and helplessness becomes intelligible. "Heart of Jesus, bruised for our offenses, have mercy on us." Grant us the grace to understand Thy grief, to sympathize with Thee, and to do everything in our power to console Thee.

3. *What ought we to do to alleviate the great grief of our Savior at the impenitence of sinners?*
Above all we can do what He demanded of His apostles in the Garden of Olives when He said: "Watch ye, and pray." May He not say of us: "I have sought one who would grieve with Me, and have found none." Let us prove to the heart of our Savior our sympathy with His grief at the impenitence of sinners.

But we must not be satisfied with sympathy alone. We must ceaselessly and fervently beg our Savior to grant sinners the grace of repentance; let us offer Him for this purpose our good works and sufferings. Divine Providence has, as a matter of fact, determined that all must co-operate in the Church of

Christ in the accomplishment of the work of Redemption. They must fill up those tilings that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ for His mystical body, the Church, as the Apostle tells us (cf. Col. 1:24). And the things that are wanting are nothing else than that all members of the Church must be made like to their Head in labor, suffering, and combat for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Christ's work is our work. The salvation of many souls depends on us: they will be saved by our prayers and works, or in default of these, will be lost.

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque writes that our divine Savior once appeared to her and told her that the divine Justice was about to visit the sins of Christians with severe retribution. "But do you," He continued, "raise your heart and hands to heaven in prayer and good works, and continually present Me to My heavenly Father as a sacrifice of love, slaughtered and immolated for the sins of the whole world; put Me as a rampart and stronghold between God's justice and sinners, to obtain for them My mercy." On another occasion our Lord told her that He was beginning to separate the chaff from the wheat, beginning to abandon sinners to their obduracy. "Then the conscience of the sinner will no longer reproach him, his intellect will not be illumined by grace, his heart will remain devoid of contrition, and he will die finally in his obduracy." The saint besought Him to send her all manner of interior and exterior sufferings rather than permit souls to be lost. The sufferings she had to endure as a result of this prayer were so severe that the cry was forced from her lips: "O sanctity of God, how terrible Thou art toward sinful souls. . . . O Lord, come to the assistance of my weakness, that I perish not beneath this weight." Our Lord answered: "This is only a little trial which I have given you by way of a foretaste; for the just endure sufferings that sinners may not perish." As a matter of fact, St. Margaret Mary had the happiness of saving a number of sinners from final impenitence. Our Lord promised her that she should always know when He granted grace to a sinner because of her intercession, and that if such a soul persevered she was to share in the joys of that soul in heaven. Here, then, we have a confirmation of the truth that we can save sinners from final impenitence and thus prevent the grief which our Savior would otherwise experience if they should die impenitent and be condemned to hell.

But we can lessen this grief of our Savior in another way, one which more vitally affects us, and that is to guard against final impenitence on our own part. As long as we are pilgrims here below, there is always a possibility that we may lose our souls. Since the grace of God is never wanting, it depends on us to guard ourselves against such a calamity. What means ought we then to adopt? One of the best means is never to commit a sin, either venial or mortal, with full deliberation. One who accustoms himself to disregard small sins loses the hatred of infringing God's law, deadens his conscience, carelessly exposes himself to the danger of one day coming to look on mortal sin as a small matter, and habituates himself to life at enmity with God. This path leads to final impenitence. Hence, let us be on our guard against deliberate sin. We shall sin often enough through weakness, ignorance, or rashness. But let us make it an inviolable rule in all our fully deliberate acts never for any consideration to commit a deliberate sin. O Jesus, grant us the grace to keep this resolution; do not permit that we begin with little sins, so that we may never fall into greater ones. For the sake of the love of Your divine heart preserve us from such misfortune, so that You may never have to say of us: "You will die in your sin."

CHAPTER XXIV

Grief of the Heart of Jesus at the Lack of Fervor of His Friends

*"The children of this world are in relation to their own generation
more prudent than are the children of light" (Lk. 16:8).*

1. *The limited zeal of so many Christians for the cause of Christ in contrast with the unlimited zeal of His enemies.* It is evident from the life of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque that our Savior complained of injuries which He suffered because of the sins of unbelievers and heretics. But the real reason for the revelation of the devotion to the Sacred Heart was the ingratitude and indifference with which so many members of His Church rewarded the great proofs of His love. To be hated by one's enemies and to be misunderstood by strangers is not nearly so saddening as to receive coldness and indifference from those nearest and dearest to us, from the members of our own household. How depressing it is for a man to see that his best intentions and efforts remain fruitless, because the zeal of his opponents is far greater and more persevering than the zeal of his followers and friends.

Our Savior tasted this sorrow even during His life on earth. When His bitter passion was drawing near. Jesus said to His apostles: "One of you is about to betray Me" (Mt. 26:21) and "all you shall be scandalized in Me this night" (Mt. 26:31) and you shall be dispersed. But when Peter assured Him that he at least would not be scandalized, but was prepared even to die with Him, our Lord answered: "This very night, before a cock crows twice, thou wilt deny Me thrice" (Mk. 14:30). In the Garden of Olives He besought His apostles to watch and pray with Him, but always found them asleep whenever He returned to them. Finally He said: "Sleep on now, and take your rest... the hour has come. . . . Behold he who will betray Me is at hand" (Mk. 14:41, 42). On the other hand, Judas had not slept: the enemies of Jesus had not slept but had carefully prepared everything in order to take Jesus a prisoner that very night. And the high priests, the scribes, and the members of the council had not slept, but had convened at the house of Caiaphas in order to proceed at once with the trial and condemnation. "Then all His disciples left Him and fled" (Mk. 14:50 ff.). Although the trial lasted beyond midnight, the Jews gathered again as soon as it was day in order to deliver Jesus to death.

This was the experience of our Lord during His life on earth, and this has been His experience often enough during succeeding ages even to our own time. Look about us! Where do we find the greater zeal, among the friends or the enemies of Christ? Certainly there are true and noble souls whose devotion to the cause of Christ leaves nothing to be desired. But is this true of most Christians? Can we say at least that their enthusiasm and self-sacrifice is not less than that of the opponents of Christianity? How is it, then, that the outspoken enemies of Christ wield such powerful political influence and are so successful in harming the Church and religion? In the crowds that they gather about their standard, we find many, unfortunately altogether too many, who wish to be considered Catholics. Just within the past years Rome has had to issue instructions reminding us of the fact that no one can be a true Catholic and at the same time a partisan of a party which openly professes hatred of God and enmity toward Christianity. It is certainly bad enough that

such instruction should have been necessary. But has it been observed by all those who are Catholics at least in name?

Even today our Savior sees many of those who have vowed fidelity to Him become traitors and renegades: He sees others, who have not fallen away, it is true, but who will not have their comfort disturbed and show determination only when there is question of informing others that they are tired of being approached with new demands; they must be comfortable at all costs. The enemies of Christ do not think of comfort; they are tireless in the combat. And the followers of Christ must have their rest! It was to such a man, one who would not be incited to fervor but would have his ease, that our Lord sent this message: "I would that thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to vomit thee out of My mouth" (Apoc. 3:15, 16). No one likes to drink lukewarm water; if accidentally we take some, we spit it out. That is the way our Savior feels toward those comfort-loving Christians who are willing to be His disciples so long as no effort or sacrifice is demanded of them, so long as they can be comfortable and at their ease; but to exert themselves for the cause of Christ, to make sacrifice, that they cannot and will not do. Such zeal they gladly relinquish to Christ's enemies in the pursuit of their aims. How many there are who, for a mere business consideration, will try one moment to pass as Catholics and the next ape the conversations of tire enemies of the Church! Manly frankness and courageous firmness is decried as rudeness, imprudence, and lack of breeding. How many fair pretexts there are to excuse half-measures in the service of Christ.

2. *The lukewarmness and vacillation of so many Christians is very displeasing to the heart of our Savior.* "Come not to Him (the Lord) with a double heart" the Holy Ghost warns men (Ecclus. 1:36). Woe to him that is of a double heart and that walks two ways on the earth (cf. Ecclus. 2:14). Men who lead double lives are the object of the ridicule of men and an abomination to the Lord. Such hesitancy in choosing sides was always hateful to God (cf. Kgs. 18:21). May the Lord, looking for a determined protagonist for His interests, not be astonished again as of old, because He sees that there is no man on whom He can count (cf. Isa. 59:16).

Often enough has our Savior emphasized the fact that no man is worthy of the kingdom of heaven who does not strive for it energetically and perseveringly. "No man can serve two masters" (Mt. 6:24). "No man putting his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62). He looks back who is unwilling to break off relations with the world at enmity with Christ; he looks back who fears that Christ's enemies would take offense at his determined adherence to Christ and His sacred cause; he looks back who is always calculating just how far he can follow his selfish inclinations and still not declare himself an enemy of Christ, Christ did not address the words which follow to a select band of close disciples, but to the multitudes that pressed around Him: "If any one come to Me, and does not hate his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple; . . . every one of you who does not renounce all that he possesses, cannot be My disciple" (Lk. 14:25 ff, 33). Jesus said that the commandment to love one's neighbor is as great as the commandment to love God (cf. Mt. 22:39); He insisted upon the commandment of love of parents (cf. Mk. 7:10 ff.). Therefore, when He commands us to hate father and mother and relatives, He means what He expressed elsewhere when He said: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me" (Mt. 10:37). It is not lawful to hate anyone in the strict sense of the word, that is, to wish them evil; but we must repulse all, even our nearest of kin, if they come between us and God, and attempt to make us faithless. The vigorous language which our Savior uses is intended to teach us how strongly we must adhere to the cause of Christ and how careless we must be of

the unpleasant consequences which such conduct may involve. We must be prepared to make any sacrifice which the interests of our heavenly King and Friend may demand of us: not only once or twice, but during our whole lives. Only "by your patience you will win your souls" (Lk. 21:19). "But whoever perseveres to the end, he shall be saved" (Mt. 24:13).

Is this, perhaps, asking too much? God is the infinite Good and He offers Himself to us as an eternal treasure; all other things are small, created, perishable treasures. Would it not be insulting to God if a man should say: "I do not want You, I prefer earthly treasures"? But you may object: "I do not say that; I do value God above all other things; on the other hand, I want to enjoy the treasures of earth to the full measure of my ability." Is this not tantamount to telling God: "You are not enough for me."

"I want many things besides Thee." Does this not imply parallel with the service of God the service of false gods from whom happiness is sought? We are not forbidden to use a single treasure of earth insofar as it is a means suited to bring us to our last end. But we may use none of them if, by their use, we transgress God's commands or are directed not toward but away from the only object of our existence. We are under obligation to love God with our whole heart and with all our strength, not merely with a part of our heart and a part of our strength. Our God is a jealous God, who suffers no rival (cf. Exod. 34:14). Our Savior is a jealous Friend, who suffers keenly when a man leaves his first charity and falls in love with earthly possessions (cf. Apoc. 2:4, 5).

Did our Savior perhaps set limits to His self-sacrifice and devotion toward us, so that we, too, may be niggardly and small in our dealings with Him? The crib answers this question and shows us of what sacrifices His divine love was capable: He emptied Himself of the glory of the eternal Son of God and was born a small, poor child. The cross also answers this question and tells us of what His human love for us was capable: it sacrificed everything, absolutely everything, even to the last drop of blood. In view of all this, can it be a matter of indifference to our Savior if we ask fearfully before each small sacrifice which His service demands: "Is this not too much? Is it really necessary? Must I absolutely do this tiring or can I not evade it in some way?" Any master would be greatly angered if his servants manifested such cold selfishness in his regard. And we wish to be the friends of Jesus, though we harbor sentiments which dishonor even a servant? We wish to repay the love of our Savior, His sufferings. His sacrifices with calculating niggardliness and lukewarm halfmeasures? He came to bring fire to the earth, a mighty blazing conflagration which was to enkindle all men. And what does He find in so many hearts? Weak sparks which just barely glow under the ashes and are carefully hidden that they may not cause comment. O Jesus, Thou hast reason enough to complain of the coldness and indifference of Thy people.

3. *Our Savior expects noble sentiments of us.* If our conscience tells us that we, too, have frequently displeased our Savior because of lack of firmness and perseverance in His service, there is no better means to atone for such negligence than to fly to His divine heart and to pray Him to enkindle our hearts once more with the flames that burn in His own. The fire of love of all the saints was kindled at this source, all their generous love of sacrifice is a consequence of His love. Who can contemplate the deeds, the sufferings, and the death of Christ, and still strive to determine accurately what he must do because of strict obligation and what he may omit. St. Paul took it as a matter of indifference that his love of Christ was decried as madness. "The charity of Christ presseth us." Let us no longer live to ourselves alone, but unto Him who died for us (cf. Cor. 5:14 ff.). Is it possible to love Christ too much? Is not all the love and enthusiasm of which we are capable insignificant in comparison with the love of Christ for us? As God He has created me, as man He has redeemed me, and as God and man He wishes to give me Himself for all eternity. Even though I had a thousand times more to give than I have, I should still have to be ashamed to

offer Him something so insignificant as a recompense for His humanly divine and divinely human love, did I not know that He is satisfied when I give Him my heart forever, but honestly my whole heart, without guile or reservation, as St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans: "Be not slothful in zeal; be fervent in spirit, sewing the Lord, rejoicing in hope. Be patient in tribulation, persevering in prayer" (Rom. 12:11, 12).

Alas, despite all our fervor we shall, nevertheless, prove unequal to the greatness of our duty, despite all our determination we shall be reminded all too frequently of the weakness of our nature, despite all our perseverance we shall often stumble and fall. Our Savior knows the material of which we are made and is full of compassion for our miser.; He takes nothing amiss while He sees that our affections and our will are His. that we are unfaltering in our devotion to His principles, that we never deliberately make concessions to His enemies, but that with all the resoluteness of which we are capable we wish to belong to Him alone.

Let us take to heart the admonition of St. Paul: "Therefore [through love of Jesus] brace up the hands that hang down, and the tottering knees, and make straight paths for your feet; that no one who is lame may go out of the way; but rather be healed. . . . Therefore since we receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, we have grace; through which we may offer pleasing service to God with fear and reverence. For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:12, 13, 28, 29).

CHAPTER XXV

Grief of the Heart of Jesus at Our Cowardice in Combat

*"Conduct thyself in work as a good
soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:3).*

1. *Christ has called us to combat.* Jesus Christ came into this world to establish a new kingdom which was to put an end to the world-wide reign of Satan. This was not

possible without combat. "Now will the prince of the world be cast out" (Jn. 12:31). He was the strong man armed who guarded His possessions and who was not to be overcome without a struggle (cf. Lk. 11:21, 22). Both leaders mobilized their forces — Satan his slaves, Christ His faithful followers. The struggle began, and at the first encounter the unlimited power of the ruler of this world was broken to such an extent that every man who so wished could be delivered from his tyranny. For the individual, however, this struggle continues, and will continue, to the end of time. No man who is able to fight in this battle can attain to eternal glory except he be crowned with the victor's crown. Jesus is the victorious ruler of this kingdom (cf. Heb. 2:9), and all His subjects wear crowns of gold (cf. Apoc. 4:4).

Our Savior tells His followers explicitly that they are called to battle. "Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword" (Mt. 10:34). There is question of a bitter,

stubborn struggle in which we must be ready to sacrifice everything, even life itself. In this struggle, he who through love of life plays a coward's role, will lose his life; but he who is prepared to sacrifice his life if necessary, will receive life eternal (cf. Jn. 12:25). When our Savior was about to sacrifice His own life, He commanded His apostles to buy swords in order to be prepared for the battle (cf. Lk. 22:36). He had in mind spiritual weapons, a lively faith, confidence in God, fortitude in bearing all manner of trials.

This battle is twofold, a battle against external persecution, and a battle against interior temptations. External persecutions are not always present to the same extent, though they never cease entirely. The battle against temptation, on the contrary, is an uninterrupted contest which never ends in a treaty of peace or even a truce, but is concluded only by decisive victory or decisive defeat. Even during the very last moments of life, hostile forces war for the possession of the soul. The verdict for or against Christ depends on the free choice of the individual. The devil seeks to make this decision in Christ's favor as difficult as possible by conjuring up before the soul various deceptive and fright-inspiring images; our Savior encourages it with His inspirations and His grace. But the devil cannot force the soul and our Savior does not do so. Man's own free will must decide the issue. "Before man is life and death, good and evil, that which he shall choose shall be given him" (Ecclus. 15:18).

In this contest there never is an armistice. As soon as we become negligent and careless, the enemy appears ready to inflict a wound. This is why the Apostle Peter warns us to be sober and watch; because the enemy, the devil, goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8). Yet this need not cause us terror, for our Leader holds a protecting hand over us and does not allow temptations to come our way which human strength cannot resist; He is faithful and does not allow us to be tempted beyond that which we can endure, but when He permits a temptation. He at the same time gives us the strength to overcome it (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13). He will not take away all our temptations, but tells us, as He told St. Paul, the apostle: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:19). To be crowned we must have striven lawfully (cf. 2 Tim. 2:5).

Our own experience proves to us that this struggle in our souls grows fiercer the more seriously we work to fulfill our duties as Christians. There is only one class of men who enjoy an existence which is more or less without conflict. They are those who have become so hardened in their evil-doing that the devil need no longer worry about the possession of their souls; they are his as certainly as death shall claim them. That is the peace of the grave. "Peace, peace," they say. "and there was no peace. . . . In the time of their visitation they shall fall down" (Jer. 6:14, 15). We shall not speak of these, but rather of those Christians who are in the midst of the combat.

2. *What are the sentiments of Christ as He gazes on His soldiers?* Our Savior looks down upon us as judge of the combat. St. Paul writes of Him: "The Lord, the just judge, will render to me a crown of justice, because I have fought the good fight and have finished my course" (cf. 2 Tim. 4:7, 8). Then he adds at once: "And not to me only, but to them also that look forward to the coming of Christ to receive the reward of their struggles." It is incontestably true that we fight under the eyes of our Savior even when the struggle is wholly within the secrecy of our souls. Our Leader constantly follows the fortunes of His whole army and of each individual combatant as well.

What does our Savior see as He reviews His army, three hundred million strong, dispersed over the whole face of the earth? He sees various grades of bravery and fortitude, beginning with the highest degree of heroism down to ordinary, barely sufficient compliance with the demands of duty. At the same time He sees a great deal of negligence, smallness of spirit, infidelity, cowardice, and defeat. The great heroes who give Him nothing but satisfaction are comparatively few in number; these are the saints, who

seriously apply the principles of Christ to all their thoughts and actions, whose one aim is to devise new means of honoring their heavenly King and Friend, to become even more conformed to His conduct and more pleasing to Him. They are those who say with St. Paul: "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). More numerous are those other soldiers of the Lord who are indeed always faithful to their King and are never guilty of grave sins, but who are fervent and negligent in His service by turns, and who, consequently, are guilty of many faults and imperfections. They are and remain friends of our Savior, but friends who do not afford Him unmixed pleasure. Because they are not faithless to the Lord, He does not forsake them, but since they are lacking in self-discipline, He chastises them and compels them by interior and exterior sufferings to renewed efforts that their negligence may not prove their undoing (cf. Heb. 12:6).

Perhaps the vast majority of Christians, unfortunately, do not attain even this level. They oscillate continually between the state of grace and the state of mortal sin, and God must often use drastic measures to frighten them out of this exceedingly dangerous condition. Their state is comparable to that of the Israelites at the time of the Judges. Whenever they enjoyed peace from their enemies, they fell into idolatry and its attending vices. The consequence was that God permitted their enemies to enslave them. When this slavery became intolerable, they returned to God and asked for mercy. Hardly had God saved them when the whole performance began anew and God was compelled to send new trials. Thus, we read that the Lord delivered them into the hands of the king of Mesopotamia, and they served him eight years; the Lord strengthened against them the king of Moab, and they served him eighty years (cf. Judg. 3:8-12 ff.); the Lord delivered them up into the hands of the king of Chanaan (cf. Judg. 4:2); the Lord delivered them into the hand of Madian for seven years (cf. Judg. 6:1); the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines and of the children of Ammon, and they were afflicted and grievously oppressed for eighteen years (cf. Judg. 10:7). Thus the catalog of God's punishments of Israel continues. Between times they were converted, but their conversion was not permanent.

Is not this a true picture of the life of many Christians? When things are going well, when temporal prosperity appears to be assured, they adore the false gods of covetousness, pride, lust, and other things which are an abomination to God. To convert them God speaks to them through His ministers and by the voice of conscience. If these measures fail to get results and He wishes to exercise mercy in their regard, He terrifies them by misfortunes, such as sickness, business failure, the death of someone near and dear. At length they realize their sorry condition, make their confession, are truly sorry for their sins, and promise for the future to lead a life more worthy of a Christian. They are in earnest for the moment, their sins are forgiven them, they live again as children of God in the state of sanctifying grace. But for how long? Health and prosperity return, old temptations return, sin lures seductively, soon the old promises of a permanent change of life are forgotten and the Holy Spirit must again depart from the soul and the devil resumes the place vacated by God. Is not this true? Is not the life of many Christians a perpetual rising from sin and falling back again, a constant change of allegiance from God to the devil?

Are these the Christians with whom Christ is pleased? Are these the soldiers who bring His cause to a successful issue, who increase and bring honor to His kingdom? How often God, through His prophets, rebuked the infidelity and vacillation of the Israelites with expressions of extreme indignation! He led them into the Babylonian captivity and when they realized their fault and had atoned for it, He brought them back to the land of their fathers. In the end, however, He was compelled to abandon His people and allow them to perish. The greater portion of the chosen people did not give God cause for much joy; and similarly a great portion, possibly the greater portion, of Christians, cause Him nothing but grief. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says: 'Why is it that so many calamities overtake you? They are the chastisements of God

for your sins. You are being punished by almighty God that you be not condemned with this world, but that you do penance" (cf 1 Cor. 11:30 ff.). If the Corinthians caused St. Paul great grief and even forced tears from his eyes by their many sins (cf. 2 Cor. 2:4), may not our Savior say with greater justice than did St. Paul: "I have sorrow upon sorrow, from them who ought to give me joy"? (2 Cor. 2:3.)

3. *The cowardice and disloyalty of so many Christians in their struggle against sin is truly a cause of grief for the heart of our Savior.* What kind of soldiers are they who, when the struggle becomes a little too strenuous, lay down their arms in surrender, and when they have been taken captive pray their leader to liberate them? If this happened but once, perhaps it might be pardoned; but a whole life woven of deliberate surrenders to the enemy followed by appeals for help, of renewed promises of fidelity always followed by repeated relapses — such a life is exceedingly shameful. No military leader would tolerate a state of things even remotely resembling this. Can our Savior then be pleased with such conduct?

The life of such a Christian is, for the most part, a life spent in the slavery of sin and of the devil, interrupted by brief intervals during which he conducts himself as a Christian should. If such an unfortunate could catch a glimpse of the condition of his soul as God sees it, he would be horrified by the spectacle. There are diseases which so disfigure a person, that men flee from the sufferer in horror. A soul disfigured by the running sores of sin is such an object of loathing for God. "A perverse heart is abominable to the Lord" (Prov. 11:20). And souls that have been sealed in baptism as members of Christ force Him to endure such a spectacle! Outwardly they would pass for Christians, but inwardly they are full of filthiness and dead men's bones (cf. Mt. 23:27).

Thus, they live animated by a sort of apparent life, but in reality dead unto eternal life. In the state of sin in which they live, they are incapable of placing a single meritorious act; all their good works are lost so far as eternal life is concerned. What will they have to show worthy of eternal recompense when the Lord shall come to reward them according to their works? The days they spent in sin were many; those spent in God's grace, but few. What regrets will be theirs in the hour of death, because their hands are empty, supposing that they should be so fortunate as to escape hell. Unfortunately there is grave reason to fear that those Christians who spend practically the whole of their lives in the service of the devil will be his also in death. St. Paul points to the Israelites who were witnesses of such great marvels in their flight from Egypt. And yet God was not pleased with the vast majority of them, but let them die in the desert without having seen the promised land. This is a warning to us, he tells us, not to follow our evil inclinations and tempt Christ as they tempted Him and were destroyed by the destroyer (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1-10).

No, divine Savior, we will not cause Thee such grief, but we will look to Thee, the author and finisher of our faith, who for our sake hast chosen the cross. For love of Thee and confiding in Thee, we will not grow wean', but resist even unto blood in the struggle with sin, and sooner sacrifice our most cherished possession than violate our vow of fidelity' (cf. Heb. 12:2 ff.). We will fight the good fight of faith with Thee and for Thee; we will keep Thy commandments inviolate that Thou mayest be pleased with us and we may be found blameless on the day of Thy coming (cf. 1 Tim. 6:12-14).

CHAPTER XXVI

Grief of the Heart of Jesus at the Coldness of so Many

Christians Toward the Sacrament of His Love

*“Would that you knew also the charity of Christ,
which surpasseth all knowledge!” (Cf. Eph. 3:19.)*

1. *Our divine Savior complained to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque especially of the ingratitude of so many men toward the Sacrament of His Love.* As manifestations of such ingratitude, He pointed to their irreverence, sacrilege, coldness, and indifference.

Sacrilege is the profanation by unworthy use of objects consecrated to God. Of all holy things given man for his use, the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is the holiest. That is why we call it “the Most Blessed” Sacrament. To profane it, therefore, is one of the worst and meanest of crimes. The consecrated hosts reserved in our tabernacles may be profaned in two ways: either by unworthy sacramental reception or by nonsacramental misuse, such as by forcing open the tabernacle, stealing the sacred vessels with their contents, throwing the sacred species on the ground or otherwise abusing them. How any Christian who really believes that our Lord is present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar can commit this latter crime, is unintelligible. During the ages of faith, civil laws made it an offense punishable by death. This crime is not unknown even today as the newspapers all too frequently inform us. For love of us Jesus is present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar as God and man, and profligate men reward such love by illtreating our eucharistic Savior in a most shameful manner. How does God regard such crimes? King Nabuchodonosor had the gold and silver vessels of the temple brought from Jerusalem to Babylon. His son Baltasar ordered that they be brought forth at a banquet and he and his guests drank from them. At once a hand appeared writing on the wall of the banquet hall and announcing that his kingdom would be taken from him and given to the Medes and Persians because he had insulted the Ruler of heaven and had used the sacred vessels of God’s house as ordinary drinking cups. That very night he was murdered and his kingdom fell into the hands of his enemies (cf. Dan. 5). This was God’s punishment for the sacrilegious misuse of sacred vessels. But what are all the sacred vessels of Jerusalem’s temple in comparison with the Most Blessed Sacrament in which the King of heaven is present with His humanity and divinity? Sacrilegious misuse of the Blessed Sacrament is, therefore, a far more damnable crime than the sacrilege of Baltasar; it is a most grievous insult offered to our divine Savior.

But our Savior is more frequently dishonored in the Blessed Sacrament by unworthy communions. The Council of Trent sums up the Catholic teaching on Holy Communion in the following words: “Since sacred functions may be performed only in a holy manner, it follows that every Christian must be the more on his guard not to approach the holy table without sufficient reverence and holiness; the more he realizes the holiness and divinity of this heavenly Sacrament, especially since we have those terrifying words of the Apostle: ‘For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord’ (1 Cor. 16:29). Wherefore, let him who wishes to communicate recall to mind that precept of the Apostle: ‘But let a man prove himself’ (1 Cor. 11:28). These words, according to the time-honored interpretation of the Church, mean that no one who is conscious of mortal sin, no matter how certain he may be that he has elicited an act of perfect contrition, may approach the holy table before he has been absolved in sacramental confession.” The opposite doctrine is anathematized, [footnote: Sess.

23. c. 7, can. 11.] The Church would not speak in this manner if she did not consider the unworthy reception of the Blessed Sacrament a very grievous offense against our Lord; yet He suffers this injury a countless number of times at the hands of those Christians who wish by the reception of the Blessed Sacrament to pose before men as faithful members of the Church. They can deceive men, but they cannot deceive God, and if our Savior complains of such sacrilege, He does so because the communions of many are an abomination in His eyes.

The reason why the unworthy reception of Holy Communion is such a great crime, is that by it the humanity of Christ is compelled to enter the soul of a man in which the devil still dwells who, we may say, welcomes Christ with scornful laughter. This Sacrament has been instituted by Christ as the especial Sacrament of His Love, to enkindle the love of God in our hearts at the source of love, His divine Heart. In a sacrilegious communion, however, the soul tells Jesus: "You came to me to increase in my heart love for You; but I do not care to love You; I prefer to be with Your enemies." In this fashion the love of our Savior is derided.

But Jesus has reason to complain of many other Christians who are not guilty of such crimes. Their coldness and indifference grieve Him. He feels this the more keenly, precisely because they are His friends, and because they do not seem to see anything unseemly in treating Him, their noblest and best Friend, in a manner in which they would not treat a fellow being to whom, because of His dignity or station, they owed respect.

2. *Unbecoming conduct toward the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.* Love, by its very nature, demands a return of love. In proportion as a friend gives greater proofs of love, in the same proportion he may expect a more ready recognition and more heartfelt return of love. The greater His efforts to serve his friend, the greater the sacrifices, the greater the advantages which he procures for him, the more deeply is he grieved if that friend, despite it all, remains cold and pretends that no service has been rendered, or takes it all as a matter of course. Similarly our Savior is deeply grieved if His friends treat Him coldly especially in that Sacrament in which, according to the words of the Council of Trent, "He has poured out, as it were, all the treasures of His divine love for men." [footnote: Sess. 13, c. 2.] His love compels Him to remain constantly in our midst; His love hides Him under the insignificant appearances of bread so that He may unite Himself to us the more intimately; His love delivers Him unresisting into man's power; His love makes of Him a daily sacrifice to His heavenly Father; His love imprisons Him in the tabernacle where He waits day and night to give us of His blessings. And His friends?

We cannot deny that many Christians are wanting in appreciation of this Most Blessed Sacrament. After all, what is the most precious treasure we have on earth? Suppose we gathered together into one place all the gold and precious stones in the possession of men, suppose we heaped up all the precious things that are found either on the surface or beneath the surface of this earth, and then put beside them one consecrated host. Where would we find the greater value? The treasures of earth certainly possess greater external splendor; beside it, the little, inconspicuous host is lost. And yet, this host contains the Creator of heaven and earth who has called all these treasures and infinitely many more from nothingness into being. In them we find a dead, cold splendor which can conjure up before our eyes false happiness; in the sacred host a living heart beats for us, a divine heart overflowing with love, which desires and has the power to make us eternally happy. In the sacred host we have the infinite Good with which created treasures cannot be compared. And yet, with what happy anticipation our hearts beat at the prospect that some earthly treasure is about to come into our possession; while the certainty that our Savior is about to come to us in Holy Communion leaves us unmoved.

"This is true," someone may say, "but if I could have at my constant disposal all manner of earthly riches, just as I can receive Holy Communion every day, the prospect of their acquisition would not make such an impression on me." O divine Jesus, it is actually Thy boundless love, if we may say so, which defeats its own end. If Thou hadst demanded great effort and sacrifices as a necessary condition to receive Thee in Holy Communion or to visit Thee from time to time, we would have greater appreciation of, and reverence for, this gift of love. But Thy love for us would not suffer this to be so. Thou didst wish to be with us always, prepared each moment to receive our visits, anxious to come into our hearts daily. In gratitude for this greater love, we lose our reverence, allow our enthusiasm to grow cold, and look upon Thy graciousness as something common! We return the greatest love, just because it is so great, with the greatest indifference.

We must not imagine, however, that our Savior expects us to live in a state of perpetual excitement and ecstasy because of His Sacramental Presence. We could not do this even if we would, nor does He demand it of us. What He does demand is our good will, a lively faith, and conduct in conformity with our faith. This lively faith in the Real Presence will prompt us to think of Him often, visit Him frequently in the Sacrament of His love, and comport ourselves in His presence with the reverence that is due the King of heaven and earth. If we compare His dignity and majesty with the conduct of many Christians while in church, we must admit that the efficacy of their faith leaves much to be desired. Look at them as they enter the church where their God dwells in the tabernacle. They know how to make the deepest and most captivating courtesies before men of high station. But do they make a real genuflection before their Savior? No, either they consider all external marks of reverence superfluous, or they make any sort of awkward gesture by bending one knee almost imperceptibly, which at best might pass as a vague suggestion of a genuflection, but one which they would certainly deem unworthy in the presence of any man of high station. During the divine service they permit not only their thoughts, but their eyes as well to wander about, because many things seem to them more worthy of attention than their God present on the altar. Is the number of those perhaps small who look upon (or at least accept) divine worship as an excellent opportunity to see others and to be seen by them? Some cannot even control their tongue for so short a time for love of their Savior, but must make inane remarks to their neighbors. During the consecration they bow a bit perhaps, and make some motions with the hand which remotely resemble striking of the breast. When Mass is almost over, an exodus from the church begins as though every moment were lost that is spent in church beyond what is absolutely necessary.

This general sketch indicates that the complaint of our Savior for the irreverence, indifference, and coldness which men exhibit toward Him in the Sacrament of His love is just. There are probably few Catholics who have nothing to reproach themselves with on this score. We shall no doubt; one day be surprised at the extent of the punishment we shall have to endure in purgatory because of our lack of reverence in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The most profound mysteries of our faith cease to make an impression on us if we do not constantly renew our faith and fervor. This is the reason why our Savior revealed the devotion to His Sacred Heart. He wanted to remind us again and again of His love and of the ingratitude of men, and thus enkindle anew our fervor.

3. *Why is this coldness on the part of men so disagreeable and painful to our Lord?* Does it detract perhaps from His happiness? When we speak of His loneliness in the Blessed Sacrament and of the inconsiderate conduct of Christians, do we wish to imply that His condition is that of a man who is bored because of isolation and loneliness? Certainly not. Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament enjoys all the bliss

of heaven; He is perfectly self-sufficient, and needs no creature to make Him happy. Besides, legions of angels always surround the tabernacle in reverence and devotion.

It is not His own advantage, therefore, which urges Him to demand gratitude, esteem, reverence, and fervor from us, but solely His love for us. In the Blessed Sacrament He keeps open court, invites us all to come to Him, and offers us as much grace as our souls are capable of receiving.

Against our will or without our consent no grace is forced upon us. Because it conduces to our greater merit and honor that we, as rational creatures, co-operate in the shaping of our eternal destiny, our Savior demands that we come to Him with love, gratitude, reverence, and ardent desires, ask Him for His graces, and prepare and enlarge our souls for their reception. Our Savior does not want to carve His friends, to speak figuratively, out of blocks of wood, but wishes to establish a living relationship of friendship between His heart and theirs.

Nevertheless, many Christians pay no attention to His invitation, as though it were not worth while to acquire such treasures, or they bring such lack of comprehension, such narrow and cold hearts that they are hardly able to receive small graces. Our Savior's love of friendship which would so gladly be divinely generous, is constrained by the coldness of those who wish to be His friends. This it is that saddens and tortures His loving heart.

O Jesus. Thou art that eternal Wisdom, which has prepared a banquet and invites us all: "Come, eat My bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you, that you may forsake your spiritual childishness and walk by the ways of prudence. For the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is prudence" (cf. Prov. 9:5, 6, 10). O Lord grant us an understanding heart that we may come to Thee, to Thy tabernacle, to Thy table with that reverent desire which is due the dignity and excellence of Thy person and of Thy gifts, and with that ardent love which is ever more enkindled by Thy love and preserves us from all coldness in dealing with Thee, until at length we become one heart and one soul with Thee.

CHAPTER XXVII

A Request of Our Best Friend

*According to Thy own heart Thou hast done all
these great things to Thy servant (cf. 2 Kings 7:21).*

1. *The practice of the devotion to the Sacred Heart.* Our divine Savior loves men with a love whose greatness and intimacy surpasses comprehension, as St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Ephesians (3:19). Many men return this love with indifference, ingratitude, contempt, and insult. It follows naturally, therefore, that everyone who wishes to be a friend of the Savior must make serious efforts to return with love the love of his divine Friend, and to atone for the injuries inflicted by others. Love and reparation are the substance, the soul of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Veneration of the physical heart which is

represented with the symbols of love and of the passion is a help to put before us the principal object, love, in a sensible form and to offer us a stimulus that is conformable to our nature. The heart, the wound, the flames, the crown of thorns, the cross, tell us of love and suffering, and remind us of the sweet duty of love and reparation.

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque writes: "My divine Master revealed to me that the great desire that animates Him, to be perfectly loved by men, suggested to Him the expedient of revealing to them His heart. ... He wished by means of this devotion to give men an object and a means which was to urge them to love Him and to love Him efficaciously." Our Savior demanded that the saint do all in her power to make amends for the ingratitude with which men return His love. Above all she was to attempt to spread everywhere the devotion to His Sacred Heart and, the better to accomplish this, to enlist the assistance of Father de la Colombiere. To further this twofold end, love and reparation, the Church has instituted the feast of the Sacred Heart. Pope Pius IX declared on August 23, 1856, that he extended the feast of the Sacred Heart to the universal Church "in order to give the faithful a new impetus to love Him who loved us and who has washed away our sins in His Blood." Leo XIII designed as the object of this devotion atonement for the ingratitude of so many by the exercise of acts of love and piety.

But love of our Savior and reparation for the injuries He suffers at the hands of men are exercises of virtue which flourished centuries before the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Hence the question arises, and it must be answered satisfactorily: What are the exercises that are peculiar to this devotion insofar as it is a new devotion, one, that is, which has but recently been added to the list of the public devotions of the Church and is recent even as an approved and recommended private devotion? It is of importance to answer this question clearly, because, on the one hand, the exercises of this devotion appear so simple and easy that doubts may arise as to their efficacy in producing such wonderful spiritual fruits; and, on the other hand, some spiritual writers have described the practices proper to this devotion in such a manner that they appeared suitable only for saints with the result that beginners in the spiritual life were afraid to adopt them. Both views are correct: the devotion to the Sacred Heart is something exceedingly simple, but its perfect practice involves the highest perfection. The reason for this must be sought in the nature of the love of God. This virtue is at one and the same time a necessary means of our progress and the highest aim toward which we can tend. Without love of God, a truly virtuous life is impossible. St. Paul says: "If I spoke with the tongues of angels, if I should have all faith so that I could remove mountains, if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1 ff.). Love is, therefore, the necessary prerequisite for every life deserving of heaven, even for the first beginnings of such a life. Nevertheless, the same Apostle tells us that charity is the greatest treasure we can strive after; that it is greater than all else (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13). Charity is the bond of perfection (cf. Col. 3:14). Every exercise of the love of God produces an increase of love, and every increase of love prompts to new exercises of love. The same is true of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, which, after all, is but a special practice of love for our Savior. Even in its most elementary form, suited to meet the requirements of the least proficient, it is love for our Savior and increases love for Him; this increased love effects in all who persevere greater devotion, and this greater devotion, in turn, increases love; and thus, all those who perseveringly cultivate this devotion to the Sacred Heart advance toward perfection.

What are the exercises of devotion which should, according to the wish of our Savior, be common to all those who honor His Sacred Heart, beginners and proficient alike? Let us begin with externals. St. Margaret Mary tells us that Christ showed her His Sacred Heart enveloped in flames, with the wound

which had opened it on the cross visible, with a crown of thorns surrounding it, and with a cross surmounting it. Our Savior explained to her that these were the symbols of His love and of the sufferings He had endured through love; that He desired that the picture of this heart should be exposed for public veneration in order to move the hard hearts of men; that He was prepared to lavish His choicest blessings on all those who should comply with His request. It is our Savior's wish, therefore, that this picture of His Sacred Heart should be exposed publicly and not merely kept in a book or hidden away in a drawer. It need not be an expensive painting. The first picture of the Sacred Heart was a simple sketch made by St. Margaret Mary. Excellent pictures can be had today for a modest sum. But the picture is not to be used as a decoration; it is to be exposed for veneration. Its object is to remind us of the love and sufferings of our Savior; to move us to love Him, to prompt us to offer Him our efforts and our works; to encourage us to ask Him for His assistance. Where it can easily be done, we ought even morning or evening to say a prayer in common before the picture.

The second request of our Savior, and this one is the more important, was that the first Friday after the octave of the feast of Corpus Christi be celebrated as a feast in honor of His divine heart; that the faithful should receive Holy Communion on that day in His honor and should make reparation by ardent and reverent prayer for all the insults which He receives while exposed in the Blessed Sacrament on our altars. The Church has established this feast throughout the world, and it is everywhere celebrated by special devotions of reparation. Because many for various reasons cannot attend these devotions on the day of the feast, the solemnity and the indulgences have in some places been transferred to the following Sunday. One, therefore, who receives Holy Communion on the prescribed day in the proper manner and with a right intention, and fervently recites some prayers of reparation, has complied with the essential request of our Lord in regard to the devotion to His Sacred Heart.

The third request of our Savior is contained in the promise that He will bestow extraordinary graces on all those who will receive Holy Communion on the first Friday of nine successive months in honor of His divine heart. We have this promise on the authority of St. Margaret Mary. The custom of receiving Holy Communion every first Friday or, if that be impossible, on the succeeding Sunday, has its origin in a counsel which Quist gave the saint for her personal advancement.

Fervent clients of the Sacred Heart have introduced other good works and pious practices which have been approved and recommended by the Church; but we are at present striving to determine what practices our Savior Himself has designated for all those who would honor His divine heart. We have seen that they are three in number: first, the celebration of the feast of the Sacred Heart in conformity with His instructions; second, the devotion of the first Fridays; third, veneration of the picture of the Sacred Heart. All the great promises which our Savior has made to those who honor His Sacred Heart are therefore attached to these three exercises.

2. *Why is the practice of this devotion so meritorious?* It might appear at first that the exercises enumerated are not at all very special and do not excel those of many another devotion. Now, it is certain that our Savior, who wishes that this devotion to His Sacred Heart be practiced by people in all walks and of all conditions of life, would not prescribe something which cannot easily be done by all those who are of good will. Hence, He could not prescribe works which would presuppose a high degree of perfection. For this reason the devotion to the Sacred Heart prescribes nothing extraordinary.

Meanwhile we must remember that the exercises prescribed by our Lord do not consist in mere external observances, but must be practiced seriously and in accordance with the spirit of the devotion to His Sacred Heart. A reception of Holy Communion which does not differ from the customary reception of

ordinary days is not sufficient, nor the mere reading or recital of an act of reparation and consecration to the Sacred Heart without penetrating to the sense and purpose of the prayer. Our Savior demands that we perform these exercises animated by the desire to return as best we can the love of His divine Heart, and that filled with grief we strive to atone for all the sins and irreverences of which we ourselves as well as others have been guilty. It was not without purpose that our Savior in His revelations showed His heart surrounded with the symbols of love and sufferings. The burning heart symbolizes the growing, grace-giving love of Christ; the crown of thorns and the cross, His suffering, self-sacrificing love; the wound in His heart, His love as it exhausts and consumes itself in death. Christ offers us these symbols of His love in order to excite in us the corresponding sentiments and resolutions: for love, a return of love; for His sufferings, sympathy; for the sacrifice of His life, fidelity unto death. For it is characteristic of the devotion to the Sacred Heart that we are to honor the love and sufferings of our Savior under the symbols of His heart pierced with a lance and wounded by ridicule and torture.

Consequently, nothing is farther removed from the spirit of this devotion than external formalism. The heart is a symbol of the interior life of the soul, where external events first become man's spiritual possession; this life it is which gives moral worth to all man's external acts. Any act in which the heart has no part has only material value; personal value is found only in those acts which come from the heart and go to the heart. God rebuked the Israelites, saying: "This people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips glorify Me, but their heart is far from Me" (Isa. 29:13). Our Savior reproached the Pharisees in similar language (cf. Mt. 15:8), because their teaching consisted of hairsplitting subtleties and their piety in external formalism. To save us from such worthless lip service and religious hypocrisy, Christ offers us His heart and asks us to penetrate into the interior life of love and suffering of this heart and to mold the sentiments of our hearts on those of His. This must be our attitude toward the celebration of the feast of the Sacred Heart, toward the devotions of reparation held in our churches on the first Friday of every month, toward the veneration of the picture of the Sacred Heart. All should help and encourage us to understand better the soul life of our Savior, to participate intimately and thoughtfully in this most precious and glorious life as far as with the grace of God we are able. To understand our Savior we need neither great learning nor many profound thoughts. A humble and contrite heart, a heart that hungers and thirsts for knowledge and love of Him, will open the door into His heart, and make the devotion to His Sacred Heart a source of the richest blessings for us.

3. *Hence we see how unfounded are the objections which have been raised against this devotion.*

It is remarkable that a devotion which is so essentially an interior devotion should have been calumniated on the ground that by it men venerated a dead heart separated from the body and the divinity of Christ, as though its object were something purely material. As a matter of fact, the devotion to the Sacred Heart is not a devotion to the heart of Jesus, insofar as His heart is only an integral part of His body, or may be conceived as not animated by the soul or united hypostatically to the Divinity. We rather honor the living heart inseparably united to the person of the Son of God and not the heart in the dead body of Christ in the tomb, which, however, would be worthy of honor. In the devotion to the Sacred Heart, therefore, we honor first, the living heart of Christ and secondly, His physical heart as a symbol of the higher life of His soul, more especially of His life of love and sacrifice. To guard against all misapprehension, the Apostolic See has decided that the picture representing only the heart of Christ and not also His person may not be exposed for public veneration on our altars. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, then, is veneration for the person of our Savior, of His love for men, a love symbolized by His physical heart. Therefore, no objection is less to the point than that of externalism.

No less undeserved is that other objection which has at times been raised against this devotion on the ground that it is a devotion of tender emotions which possibly might be suited for sensitive souls, but hardly for men. Our Lord's request that we honor His Sacred Heart is directed to all, therefore, also to men. Or is it perhaps a man's privilege and prerogative to spend himself wholly in external affairs and to have no time for the cultivation of his soul, his heart, his sentiments? Christ surely is a Man who deserves the admiration and enthusiasm of men. Any man who wants to know manhood in its highest perfection must study the life of Christ. There he will find love devoid of all self-seeking, devotion to the interests of the individual and of the many, self-sacrifice, loyalty, and steadfastness unto death. Are these qualities that do not enhance a man? Our heavenly Father addressed these words to men also: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him" (Mt. 17:5). To know Jesus, not merely the external facts of His life, but the sentiments which animated Him, and to conform our lives to these sentiments, is not a matter which may be relinquished in favor of women, religious, and priests, but is something which is necessary for anyone who wishes to deserve the name of Christian. In every Christian, Christ is to be formed anew (cf. Gal. 4:19). For all those whom God has predestined for the kingdom of His Son, He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son (cf. Rom. 8:29). This is what the devotion to the Sacred Heart is to effect in us.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Refuge of All

Come all to Me (cf. Mt. 11:28).

1. *The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is one of those marvelous dispositions of divine providence which are not too exalted for the least proficient nor too lowly for the most advanced.* Every man who is at all able to elicit acts of faith and love can venerate the love and the sufferings of the Sacred Heart and offer his own heart in love and sympathy. And yet, to penetrate sympathetically into the life of suffering and love of the soul of Christ is something so exalted that even the highest of the saints in heaven will not tire of this occupation during the endless ages of eternity: "O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet" (Ps. 33:9). Such tasting of the Lord by contemplating this love and suffering is the art of the saints on earth and their bliss in heaven.

Moreover, the devotion to the Sacred Heart because of its varied and luxuriant growth as a devotion recommended by the Church offers every man something that must appeal to his taste. Most Catholics prefer to have in their devotions some external object upon which they can concentrate their thoughts and their affections. Our Savior provided for them by recommending the veneration of the picture of the Sacred Heart as a suitable means to touch their hearts. Pictures or statues of the Sacred Heart are now found in almost all churches.

Other Catholics find that they need definite vocal prayers. The Church, in addition to the liturgical prayers found in the missal and breviary, has approved and enriched with indulgences a litany, a little office of the Sacred Heart, acts of consecration, and many other prayers. Almost all of the more recent Prayer Books, especially those books particularly designed to honor the Sacred Heart, of which a goodly number is now available, contain either all or the greater number of these prayers. In them we also find novenas in honor of the Sacred Heart and instructions on consecrating the month of June to this divine heart. To this latter devotion a plenary indulgence and many partial indulgences are attached.

Many, again, are not satisfied with private devotions; they prefer to join a society or confraternity that they may, in union with others, the more perfectly comply with the desires of the Sacred Heart. Even St. Margaret Mary appreciated the value of organization. She writes: "If it should be possible to organize a society for the practice of this devotion, a society in which the members mutually shared their good works, this would, I think, be very pleasing to this divine heart." In a later letter she expresses her pleasure at the fact that such societies had begun to take form. Such a confraternity has been in existence for a century and more with headquarters in Rome, in the Church of Santa Maria della Pace. In the year 1900 there were over 10,000 affiliated centers. There are also other associations in honor of the Sacred Heart, for example the Guard of Honor of the Sacred Heart, and the Apostleship of Prayer. It is not necessary to enter into further details. From what has been said it is evident that this devotion to the Sacred Heart in its fuller development takes into account the wishes and needs of all.

It would be erroneous, however, for anyone to imagine that, in order to be a truly fervent disciple of the Sacred Heart, he must become a member of a great many associations which promote this devotion and must recite a great number of vocal prayers. To do a little well is far better than to do a great deal superficially. Above all, we must distinguish ourselves in the essential practices: in the celebration of the feast of the Sacred Heart, in the monthly devotions of reparation, and in paying homage to the picture of the Sacred Heart according to the prescription of our Lord.

We shall mention only one more association which anyone can join and from which he will reap great advantage. St. Margaret Mary writes: "It seems to me that it is the wish of our Savior that we associate ourselves with the angels and cultivate devotion to them, because it is their special duty to love, reverence, and praise Him in the Sacrament of His Love. If we are associated with them, they will represent us in His presence not only to give Him our homage, but also to love Him for us as well as for those who love Him not and to atone for the irreverences of which we have been guilty in His holy presence.

Let us, then, league ourselves with the holy angels and more especially with our guardian angel. Our prayers are so full of distractions, our love, despite the best of will, is often so cold, our conduct in His presence leaves so much to be desired on the score of the reverence which we owe God. Let us, then, offer God the burning love, the reverence and adoration of the angels to make amends for our shortcomings. Let us invoke these heavenly spirits and say: "O holy angels, praise, love, reverence our Savior in the tabernacle here and every place where He is present on earth, and atone for the neglect of which we are guilty." The angels will gladly hear our prayer and ally themselves with us even here on earth for the glory of the King of heaven since we hope hereafter to continue to glorify Him forever in their company in heaven.

2. *Consecration of the family to the Sacred Heart.* There is another sanctuary besides the tabernacle where our Savior wishes to rule. This is the Catholic home. St. Margaret Mary on more than one occasion mentions the fact that our Savior desires to rule the Christian family by means of the devotion to His Sacred Heart. "Our Lord has told me," she says, "that He would bless abundantly every place where the

picture of His Sacred Heart is exposed for veneration and love: that He intends by this means to reunite disrupted families and to protect others which are threatened by some great calamity: that He would pour forth the tender sweetness of His burning love over all associations in which the picture of His Sacred Heart should be honored." In another place she writes: Since the Sacred Heart is the source of all blessings. Jesus let me know "that He would generously pour forth His blessings wherever the picture of His Sacred Heart should be honored, because His love compels Him to give to souls of good will the exhaustless treasures of His sanctifying and saving graces: that He seeks empty hearts to fill them with the sweetness of His burning love, to consume and transform them into Himself: that He desires humble and submissive souls, who know no other activity than to do what pleases Him." Then the saint repeats the promises of our Savior made to families and associations who expose the picture of His heart for veneration and concludes with the promise of our Savior, that He will keep their hearts in harmonious union and stay the anger of God's just judgments. She continues: "Our Savior is particularly pleased to be honored under the image of a physical heart; He desires that this picture be exposed publicly: He promises to pour forth generously the graces in which His heart abounds upon all who honor Him. Wherever this picture shall be exposed for veneration, it will call down all manner of blessings."

The Church has complied with the wishes of the Sacred Heart and has recommended that Catholic families expose this picture in their homes and dedicate themselves by common exercises of piety to the service of this Sacred Heart. The introduction of the prayer of consecration is as follows: "Sacred Heart of Jesus, who didst manifest to St. Margaret Maty the desire of reigning in Christian families, we today wish to proclaim Thy most complete regal dominion over our own."

What is the meaning of the expression: Christ is to reign in the family? It means that the family is to profess faith in Christ as the only-begotten Son of the Father, as the Redeemer of the human race, as the Dispenser of all graces, as the Foundation of our hope, as the Future Judge, as the King of heaven and earth. It means that the members of the household, parents, children, inmates, are to love the Savior, who has loved them first and has sacrificed His life for them. It means that the morals of the family are to be those approved by Christ and that all the details of family life are to be arranged so that the glance of our Savior may rest there with pleasure. It means that the sanctity of the marriage bond must be kept inviolate and incorporate new dwellers in the heavenly Jerusalem so that parents and children may one day gather about the throne of the glorified Savior in love and joy.

Since the devil today exercises his gruesome reign not only in hell, but also in a very particular manner in the married life of many and makes the family an antechamber of hell, all married people who claim to be Christian should enthrone Christ in their homes and in common honor their King with their lips and with their hearts. The family ought to be on a small scale what the Church, spread over the face of the earth, is on a large scale. The relation of Christ to the Church, His bride, and of the Church to Christ, her Bridegroom, should be reflected in every Christian family in undimmed, irreproachable purity as the Apostle so beautifully teaches (Eph. 5:22 ff.). And as the Church has consecrated herself and the whole human race to the Sacred Heart (June 11, 1899), so it is fitting likewise that every Christian family consecrate itself to this divine heart; for the words that Pope Leo XIII wrote on that occasion are true of every family: "Our eyes see today a divine omen that augurs great blessings: the most Sacred Heart of Jesus reigns from the cross, resplendent with the light of the flames of love which issue from it. In Him is all our hope, from Him we must seek salvation, and from Him we may surely expect it."

3. *The Sacred Heart of Jesus, refuge of sinners.* There is a numerous, unfortunately too numerous, class of Christians who seem to be under the impression that they are excluded from the practice and the

blessings of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. They are those who, depressed by the consciousness of their many and great sins, feel that so holy, so pure, so exalted a devotion as that to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is not for them. This is an error.

During our Lord's life on earth, He was often found in the company of sinners. St. Mark tells us expressly, "for they were many, who also followed Him" (Mk. 2:15). The Pharisees considered this a defect and asked His disciples: "Why does your Master eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" But Jesus answered them: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. For I came not to call the just, but sinners" (Mk. 2:16-17).

Has our Savior perhaps changed? Has He altered His views? Does He no longer care to seek and save that which is lost? St. Margaret Mary, writing of this devotion, says: "Satan is exerting all his power to prevent this devotion, but Jesus will rule despite His enemies and make Himself Lord and Master of our hearts; for His main object in this devotion is to convert souls to His love." He promised "to avert the just anger of God from them and to restore them to the state of grace, if they should be so unfortunate as to fall into sin." Similar expressions recur again and again: "I hope that this devotion will be a means which the Lord will use to save a great number of souls from destruction, to eradicate the rule of Satan in their hearts, and to bring them again by His grace to the way of salvation. Streams of grace are continually issuing from the Sacred Heart: one of these is the stream of mercy for sinners, which brings them the spirit of contrition and penance. This devotion is, as it were, a final effort of our Savior to induce men to accept the sweet liberty of His love."

Sinners, therefore, are certainly not excluded from the practice of this devotion. If they have already washed away their sins by contrition, confession, and sacramental absolution, they are again friends of this divine heart and are as dear to it as a Matthew, a Zacchaeus, a Peter, a Paul, a Mary Magdalen. They will find in this Sacred Heart a source of grace to purify their souls from the last stains of sin. The remembrance of what they have been and what the mercy of God has done for them will be a potent stimulus to atone for the past by a greater fervor in the present.

On the other hand, they may still be in the state of sin, because they have not become cleansed by contrition and confession. If they are unwilling to repent, they are, of course, excluded from the devotion to the Sacred Heart; for no man can love our Savior and at the same time wish to remain in the state of sin.

But if they desire to free themselves from the fetters of sin and to return to their Savior, they may boldly fly to His Sacred Heart; they will not be rejected. They are even in a position to give Him peculiar pleasure. Whenever a person has lost a very precious object to which he is greatly attached and later finds it again, he experiences a great joy which he would not otherwise have had. Such is the pleasure that fills the heart of our Lord whenever a sinner contritely returns to Him: "There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance" (Lk. 15:7). If your conscience reproaches you, give our Savior this pleasure without delay. He will press you to His heart joyfully and invite the angels, saying: "Rejoice with Me, because this My son was dead, and is come to life again: was lost, and is found" (cf. Lk. 15:24).

CHAPTER XXIX

The Promises of the Sacred Heart

"He has given us most great and precious promises" (2 Pet. 5:4).

1. *Meaning of the promises in favor of the devotion to the Sacred Heart.* While our divine Savior still dwelt on earth in our midst. He promised to all who should accept His doctrine and observe His commandments blessings which cannot be surpassed. "He who believes and is baptized, shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). "As I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me. he also shall live because of Me" (Jn. 6:58). "He who has My commandments, and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. But he who loves Me, will be loved by My Father, and I will love him. and manifest Myself to him" Jn. 14:21). These and all the other glorious promises which we read in Holy Scripture are matters of faith. We are obliged to accept them and to make them the guiding principles of our lives. Such promises were not given in later centuries, for God has so ordained that the revelation obligatory on all Christians was to be closed with the death of the apostles. This does not mean that it is impossible for God to make further revelations; but simply that it is His will that we are not to esteem these later revelations as much as — not to say more than — those recorded in Scripture.

Later revelations are either intended only for particular individuals or, if intended for all, it is not necessary that all accept them or follow their dictates as though they were commandments. The certitude which we possess regarding such revelations rests mainly on the fact that the Church, after careful investigation, has approved them as worthy of belief. The Church has thus investigated and approved the revelations of the devotion to the Sacred Heart and the promises attached to the practice of this devotion. She has not only declared that there is nothing contrary to faith or morals in these revelations and promises, but has, as a result of them, instituted the feast of the Sacred Heart and encouraged all the faithful to practice this devotion. She has, moreover, canonized Margaret Mary Alacoque. Hence, we can have full confidence in the revelation of the devotion to the Sacred Heart and in the promises attached to it; it would be neither reasonable nor useful to neglect them.

Now even though our divine Savior has attached many great promises to the devotion to His Sacred Heart, nevertheless these promises should not be our chief motive in cultivating this devotion fervently. St. Margaret Mary writes: "If Christians only knew how pleasing this devotion is to Jesus, not one of them, no matter how weak the love which he bears our most loving Savior, but would practice it." Because of His love for us, our Savior earnestly desires that we honor His Sacred Heart. We wish to be true friends of Jesus: then let us comply with His request. This should be our main reason for cultivating devotion to His Sacred Heart, since this devotion is that proof of our love for Him which He Himself has demanded. O Jesus, Thou hast loved us so unselfishly, share with us a little of the nobility of Thy divine heart so that in the practice of this devotion we may desire rather to procure Thy honor and to give Thee pleasure than to promote our own advantage.

Nevertheless, we must not neglect the promises of our Savior; for He has made them in view of our weakness. In the Gospel He commands us, when we meet with difficulties in His service, to think of the reward which will one day be ours (cf. Lk. 6:23). He even promises us temporal blessings; but the very

manner in which He makes these promises shows clearly that we are not to attach our heart to them, but only hope for them confidently while we serve Him faithfully. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things (of which you have need) will be given you besides" (Mt. 6:33).

The same is true of the promises made in favor of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. Here, too, Jesus promises divine aid in temporal wants. On this point St. Margaret writes: "As regards lay people, they will obtain by means of this sweet devotion all the help that they need in their state of life, that is, domestic peace, a sweetening of their labors, the blessing of heaven upon all their undertakings, and consolation in distress." But all these blessings are secondary matters and are granted only insofar as they may be useful in promoting salvation. For this reason the Saint adds at once: "They will find a refuge in this adorable heart during their whole earthly pilgrimage, but especially in the hour of death. Oh, how sweet the death of those who have perseveringly cultivated devotion to the heart of Him who is to be their judge."

2. *The spiritual advantages which are granted to those who cultivate this devotion are worthy of very special consideration.* The nature of the promise is always in keeping with the practice of the devotion. Just as our Savior while on earth made general promises to those who accepted His doctrine and observed His commandments, and special promises to those who for love of Him left all and dedicated their lives to apostolic activities, so likewise He has made general promises to all those who shall honor His Sacred Heart and special promises to those who consecrate themselves to Him in a special manner and strive to promote this devotion to the best of their ability.

When our Savior promises that "He will pour out the graces of His divine love from the abundance of His heart" on all those who celebrate the feast of the Sacred Heart. He is making a general promise. So, likewise, when He says that He will pour out generously the treasures in which His heart abounds upon those who honor the picture of the Sacred Heart. The Church refers to this general promise when she declares in the office of the feast of the Sacred Heart that this feast has been instituted in order that the faithful, by venerating the picture of this most holy heart, may more devoutly venerate the love which Christ has shown us in His passion, in His death on the cross, in the institution of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and as a result participate more fully in the blessings of this love. Growth in love for our Savior is a very natural fruit of the proper exercise of this devotion to the Sacred Heart; it is also the noblest fruit which it can produce in us. All other graces are significant only insofar as they tend to preserve and increase this love. Hence, St. Margaret Mary writes: "The main purpose of our Savior in instituting this devotion was to convert the world to His love." "I know of no other devotion which is so well calculated to lead a soul in a short time to perfection, and to allow it to taste that true sweetness which is peculiar to the service of Christ." Perfection is nothing else than the love of God dominant in all our acts. The devotion to the Sacred Heart is an exceptional means to enkindle in us such a living, energetic love. We need no further argument urgently to recommend this devotion.

Our Lord has made special promises to those who consecrate themselves to His divine heart. St. Margaret Mary writes: "Our Savior has told me that the pleasure He experiences when He is known, loved, and honored by a creature is so great that, if I am not mistaken, He has made the promise that all those who dedicate and consecrate themselves to Him will not be lost." She says the same in another place: "All those who are consecrated to this heart will not be lost."

What is meant by this consecration, we can gather from the formula of consecration composed by St. Margaret Mary and approved and indulgenced by Pope Leo XIII. It begins with the words: "I, N.N., give and consecrate myself, my person, my life, my labors, my sufferings to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ in order that I may use all that I am and have only for His honor, love, and glory. It is my

irrevocable determination to belong wholly to Him, to do every thing for love of Him, and to renounce with my whole heart everything which might be displeasing to this divine heart." The consecration, therefore, consists in the complete dedication to the Sacred Heart with the firm determination to live in the future only for His honor. To all those who are animated by this desire, our Savior has made the promise that they will not be lost. Essentially the same promise is already found in Holy Writ, where we read: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them everlasting life; and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand" (Jn. 10:27. 28). If Jesus, therefore, assures all those who consecrate themselves entirely to His divine heart that they shall not perish, it is in perfect accord with the promises which He made during His temporal life on earth in favor of His sheep who know His voice and follow Him.

And this promise is especially true of those who consecrate themselves to this divine heart not only that they may practice this devotion themselves, but that they may spread it among others to the best of their ability. One year before her death, the Saint wrote to a religious (P. Croiset): "Our Savior is consumed with an ardent desire to be known, loved, and honored by men in atonement for the many bitter and humiliating experiences He has suffered at their hands. So great is this desire, that He has promised that all those who consecrate and dedicate themselves to Him, in order to afford Him this pleasure — that is, to love, honor, and glorify Him and to strive, as far as they can according to the measure of the means He will put at their disposal, that others also honor Him in this way — will not be lost: that He will be their secure refuge from all the snares of their enemies, but especially in the hour of death: that He will receive them lovingly into His divine heart and thus assure their salvation; that He will take care to sanctify and glorify them before His heavenly Father to the same extent to which they procured the spread of the kingdom of His love in the hearts of men."

The Saint says of herself: "I feel entirely lost in this divine heart as though in a bottomless abyss, where the Lord discloses to me treasures of love and of grace destined for those persons who will consecrate and dedicate themselves to Him in order to give and procure for Him as much love and glory as they can; but these treasures are so great that words fail when I attempt to describe them."

Apostolic love and enthusiasm for the practice and the spread of the devotion to the Sacred Heart is, therefore, a sign of predestination and an earnest of great glory and happiness in heaven. Yet we must not forget the words of warning which St. Margaret has added. Our Savior is indeed anxious to give us precious gifts; "but from those — and these are His words — who do not use them and do not permit them to operate in their souls, they will again be withdrawn; for this is the precious heritage of salvation, which is tendered us by our heavenly Father as a final means to cure our ills."

3. *But what shall we say of that so-called "great promise"?* Its wording is as follows: "I promise thee in the unfathomable mercy of My heart that My omnipotent love will procure the grace of final penitence for all those who communicate on nine successive first Fridays of the month; they will not die in My disfavor, or without having received their sacraments, since My divine heart will be their sure refuge in the last moments of their life."

In brief, the grace of a happy death is here promised all those who will worthily receive Holy Communion on nine successive first Fridays of the month in honor of the Sacred Heart. This revelation does not enjoy the certainty of an article of faith, any more than the other revelations made to St. Margaret Mary or to other saints; yet it has been examined by the Church and has not been rejected; hence, it is worthy of belief. No man, however, can say with certainty: "I have satisfied the conditions of the nine first Fridays and hence I shall infallibly be saved." With absolute certainty he does not even know that he has

received Holy Communion worthily each of those nine times. He may hope that he has if the voice of his conscience thus testifies; but absolute certainty he can never have.

Let us, then, do what we can and leave the rest in perfect confidence to our Savior; this confidence in Jesus will certainly not prove to our disadvantage. The Church has approved this practice of the nine first Fridays and has granted a plenary indulgence on each of the nine Fridays, [footnote: *Enchiridion Indulgentiarum*, No. 252. See also English Raccolta, No. 252.]

What is paramount for us is that we strive to comply with the wish of our divine Savior as perfectly as possible and afford Him this pleasure. The more generous we show ourselves toward Him, the more generous He will be toward us; the less we think of ourselves and the more we think of Him, the more will He think of us. Let us strive to live only for Him, then we shall certainly die a happy death in Him. The devotion to the Sacred Heart is a special form of prayer. But persevering prayer is the means instituted by Christ to obtain final perseverance, as all theologians teach with St. Augustine [footnote: St. Augustine, *De Dono Persev.* c. 16. n. 39] and St. Thomas Aquinas, [footnote: St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* I, 2ae, q. 114, a. 9 ad L]

If we remain faithful in the practice of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, we are persevering in prayer. But perseverance in prayer is inseparably connected with final perseverance, therefore also with the reception of the last sacraments, insofar as they are necessary for salvation. If a man dies in the state of sanctifying grace, he is saved, even though he has not received the last sacraments through no fault of his own. This is why we read in that promise made to St. Margaret Mary: "They will not die without having received their sacraments"; that is, without those sacraments that they need to obtain salvation. Let us encourage ourselves to a fervent practice of the devotion to the Sacred Heart by considering these promises which our Savior has made to those who practice this devotion; but let us be influenced even more by the desire to do everything, as far as we can, that is pleasing to Him.

CHAPTER XXX

One Heart With the Heart of Jesus

*"And I will give you a
new heart" (Ezech. 36:26).*

1. *The new heart.* In the Old Law God repeatedly promised through His prophets to make a new covenant with men and give them a new heart, one in which the knowledge of truth and the love of God should be written (cf. Jer. 31:31 ff.). This prophecy found its accomplishment in Christ as He Himself testifies (cf. Jn. 6:44, 45). All the fullness of truth and grace was in the Son of God made man, and of this fullness all who belong to Him have received (cf. Jn. 1:14-16) so that Christ lives in all (cf. Rom. 8:10; Col.

2:6 ff.). Quist's life is our life. His heart is our heart, and His sentiments are our sentiments. This is the New Testament which God has made with us. We are to live with the life of the divine heart of Jesus.

When our divine Savior revealed for the first time to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque "the ineffable mysteries of His most holy heart," He told her in so many words that of herself she was a very inadequate instrument for the accomplishment of the great task He had set for her. Then He asked her for her heart. She told Him to take it. He did so and put it into His adorable heart, where He allowed her to see it as a little atom being consumed in that fiery furnace. Then, drawing it out like a burning flame in the form of a heart. He restored it to the place from which He had taken it and said: "Behold, My beloved, a precious proof of My love. I inclose in thy heart a little spark of the most ardent flame of My love, to serve thee as a heart and to consume thee till thy last moment." The sentiments which henceforward filled the Saint are mirrored in her words: "I am no longer able to busy myself about anything except the Sacred Heart of my Jesus. I will die content if I have procured for Him a little glory. . . . If I but love Him and He rules, that is sufficient for me."

Here we see the goal toward which by its very nature the devotion to the Sacred Heart tends to have one heart with the heart of Jesus, to surrender oneself wholly, that is, to give up all self-seeking, to forget oneself entirely in order to live only by that fire which the love of Jesus has enkindled in us, to live by His love, to live through His love, to live for His love. This is nothing else than the observance of the commandment which enjoins us to love God with our whole soul, with our whole heart, and with all our strength. The ability to observe this commandment we have not of ourselves, but of Christ from whose heart all graces come. This truth the devotion to the Sacred Heart should always keep before us: Whatever we are, whatever we can do, that we are and can do only through Christ. His heart is the source of the whole supernatural life; from Him comes all light, all strength, all love, all true sentiments, all noble endeavors, all holy works. As the Church is a continuation of the life of Christ on earth, so the heart of our Savior is the heart of the Church. God's promise to give His people a new heart has been fulfilled in a manner which no man ever could have suspected. The new heart is not only the noblest human heart, without stain, and replete with holiness and grace; it is a divine heart, in which the heavenly Father is well pleased, because He sees in it the undimmed reflection of His own glory, and because this heart is His greatest and all-sufficient glorification. Christ accomplished many great works by which He glorified the Father. But that which gave to all these works their moral value had its origin in His heart, in His self-surrender to His heavenly Father, in His obedience, in His virtue, and most of all in His love. This love is, in the first place, a created love; but the created love is an effect of the uncreated love by which it is continually fanned to a white heat; it is the love of a divine person, and therefore it possesses all the dignity proper to a divine person. Human language is far too weak and inadequate to express fully all the dignity and glory which the words "Heart of Jesus" connote. The heart of Jesus contains at one and the same time both divine love and the highest human love; it is the epitome of all created and uncreated sanctity; it is properly the only glorification of God on the part of the human race, for all other good is good only because it is a fruit of union with Christ. No man can please God except through Christ, [footnote: Council of Trent, Sess. 6, C. 16; Sess. 14, C. 8.] The heart of Quist is the sun which makes us children of the light, it is the furnace whence issues all life-giving warmth without which everything is cold, dark, and dead. The heart of Christ is the center of the supernatural world. So gloriously has God kept His promise to give His people a new heart.

2. *Our union with the heart of Jesus.* The treasures of the Sacred Heart of Jesus are meaningless for us, if we are not in living communion with this divine heart. If we abide not in Jesus, we are withered

branches destined to be cast into the fire and burned (cf. Jn. 15:6). The heart of Jesus must become our heart; and the more fully it becomes our heart, the more truly our heart will be a new heart, and the greater the pleasure with which our heavenly Father will regard us. But there are degrees of union of Christian hearts with the heart of Jesus. What does this mean?

The essential union with Christ, indispensable for salvation, is the state of sanctifying grace. The fullness of all grace is in Christ and of His fullness we have all received. Christ is the light of the world; by sanctifying grace we are delivered from the darkness of sin and damnation and translated into the kingdom of light (Col. 1:12 ff.). Children who have not yet attained the use of reason are made partakers of this union with Christ without any effort of their own. But in adults this union cannot be maintained without active co-operation. They must work with grace and perform good works; they must struggle to persevere in grace by overcoming temptations; they must make sacrifices for the supernatural life. If we are determined to maintain this union at all costs, if we are prepared to relinquish every earthly possession, every form of pleasure, rather than permit ourselves to be separated from the love of our Savior, we have attained the first degree of union of our hearts with the heart of Jesus. He who is animated by such sentiments has adopted the sentiments of Christ, and his heart, in a true sense, is one heart with Christ's heart. Such a disposition may be summarized in the principle: God above all things: I must lose everything rather than lose God. But this is merely the lowest degree of union of our hearts with the heart of Jesus.

Our Savior not only did not prefer the tilings of this world to God, or make them equal to God, but He did not love them at all, except insofar as the love of God demanded this of Him. Wealth, comfort, human esteem were not means suitable to the end which the will of His heavenly Father had appointed for Him. That is why He did not love them, but chose instead as His portion poverty, suffering, humiliations, and the bitter death of the cross. He loved men and He loved some more than others. The reason for this love was again the love of His heavenly Father, who had put into His heart love for mankind in general and special love for privileged souls. The will of God was the sole determining factor of the deliberate acts of our Savior's will. Whatever He loved besides God, He loved solely for God's sake and only insofar as the love of God demanded this of Him.

Identity of sentiment with the sentiments of Christ, therefore, implies detachment of heart from all earthly things considered solely in themselves and prescindng from their relationship to God. The heart of Jesus is an undivided heart; anything that does not pertain to the love of God finds no place there. If our heart is to be one with the heart of Christ, then love of God alone must rule in our hearts. Anything that would enter our hearts must prove that it is part of the love of God. It is not enough that it is not a mortal sin. There can be no question of deliberate sin, not even in small matters. It would be blasphemous even to think that our Savior had ever deliberated: "Is this thing that I intend to do at most a venial sin and therefore not a mortal sin?" And if such conduct is an abomination to the heart of Jesus, how can our hearts be perfectly one with His if they follow such principles or pennit such deliberations? Union of heart with the heart of Jesus means the exclusion of all deliberate sin, no matter how small the sin may seem to be.

But this is not yet enough. It would hardly redound to our Savior's greater glory if we could only say of Him that He had never deliberately done anything sinful. The love of His heart was an absolutely pure love. All love of earth, even though not sinful, is a stain in the sight of God if it is not prompted by love of God and directed toward this love. If the pure sentiments of Christ are to live in us, we may love nothing created, absolutely nothing at all, for its own sake, but only for God's sake; we must purify our hearts of all love of earth, because only a detached heart can love God as the heart of Jesus loved Him. We may love men, we must love all men, we must love some more than others; but the motive and the measure

of all our love must be the love of God. We may strive after the treasures of this world solely as means to help us serve God. We may seek the things which creatures can give us, if, and insofar as, they help us to prove our love for God. Good fortune or evil fortune, wealth or poverty, pleasure or pain, life or death will then become for us matters of indifference; they will appear desirable only insofar as they promote our only love, the love of the greatest Good.

This is, of course, high perfection, and it is questionable if we shall ever attain it fully in this life. Yet all our efforts must be directed toward it; and if at the end of our life we are still imperfect, God in His mercy has prepared a place of purgation where in purifying flames the gold of the love of God will be cleansed from all the dross which still clings to it as vestiges of our exile on earth. Freedom from all deliberate attachment to creatures for their own sakes is, therefore, the second degree of union of our hearts with the heart of Jesus.

There is still a higher degree of conformity of sentiments with the sentiments of Jesus, which to many will appear an unattainable ideal. It will be sufficient to indicate it briefly. Jesus, who, if He had so wished, could have chosen wealth, honor, and legitimate pleasure, chose instead, for love of us, poverty, humiliations, and sufferings. Is it not possible, therefore, for a noble heart to choose for love of Jesus those things which He chose, provided that the will of God does not determine otherwise? Great saints have been animated by these sentiments and have in this manner proved their love for their Savior. St. Margaret Mary testifies that the thought of the suffering Lord filled her with the desire to suffer with Jesus, and with the wish that her sufferings might never cease even for a moment. Her desire for sufferings was abundantly satisfied. If this perfection of union with our suffering Savior seems to us unattainable, we can, at least after His example, bear with patience and resignation the sufferings which God's providence sends us. Then our heart will one day become one with the heart of Jesus in that land where this union implies unalloyed joy and happiness.

3. *The perfect union in heaven of our hearts with the heart of Jesus is a mystery which we believe here below, but cannot understand.* The kingdom of Christ, which on earth embraces all those who suffer and strive for His cause, will not cease in heaven; mere, however, combat will give place to the victor's crown, and the Church militant will become the Church triumphant. King of the kingdom of the blessed is Christ. His heart is the heart of the Church triumphant. His heart and the hearts of His followers will be but one heart. Of course, each of the blessed will have his own body and his own physical heart; he also will have his own soul endowed with intelligence and free will. But all beatific knowledge and all beatific love will have its source and origin in Christ, just as all grace which we pilgrims receive here below is vital energy from the vine which is Christ. Even in heaven the blessed are not merely individuals existing for themselves alone, but constitute there, even as here, the mystical body of Christ, with this difference, however, that in heaven the union of all with each other and with Christ is absolutely perfect. The sentiments of Christ are the sentiments of each individual, nor does the least obstacle mar such conformity. These sentiments are the purest, most ardent love of God, not a love of sacrifice nor of suffering, for there is nothing to be sacrificed or suffered, but only rapturous, blissful, intoxicating love of God. All the flames of this love have their origin in the heart of Jesus, and gather in the heart of Jesus, and in union with the love of the heart of Jesus they constitute the worship of heaven that endures without ceasing from day to day, from hour to hour. How long will this union of all hearts with the heart of Jesus endure? Forever!

